



## Rock solid: BMW 5 Series Touring

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Words are funny things. Take, for instance, flammable and inflammable; they mean exactly the same thing, where you might expect one to mean the opposite of the other. On the other hand some words have several meanings. If I were to describe the BMW 5 Series Touring as solid, I would not necessarily be saying that it is neither a liquid nor a gas!

Of course, solid also means firm, strong and although this certainly describes the BMW there's more to it than that. There's a boldness about this Tourer that you feel as soon as you slide into the driving seat. The chunky steering wheel together with an array of buttons and knobs all have a quality to them that seems to connect you with the car. It's almost a symbiotic experience, as if the car passes on its solidness to you in a strange kind of way.

To the man in the street, the BMW 5 Series Touring may not look all that special – it is, after all, a large estate – but on second glance there is more to this car. It has an athletic prowess about it, unusual in your average Tourer. Those familiar with the E60 5 Series model, launched back in 2003, will probably not notice too many alterations to this latest guise and with UK sales of the 5 Series looking strong – 2006 saw another all-time high for BMW with over 19,000 units sold – it's no wonder. This new-look 5 Series, launched in March 2007, is distinguished most easily by its 'clear glass technology' headlamps, tail lights and indicators.

For an estate-shaped vehicle, the 5 Series Touring behaves and acts like a normal saloon. On the road it's assured and

planted with a firm, positive feel to the steering. Slipping through the six-speed gearbox was a pleasurable experience akin to driving a much sportier machine. The model I tested, the 530d M Sport Touring was fast enough for an every day car offering 235hp and producing 500Nm of torque it was more than up to the task of a load lugging estate. According to official figures this car will get up to 62mph in just under 7seconds but for the more light-footed it will also return a very healthy 42.8mpg.

There are, as with many things these days, a few drawbacks. First, there is the price which at £40,505 OTR is on the high side although you need to bear in mind that this is a luxury model. My test vehicle did have some extras fitted including DAB radio, leather upholstery and a towbar which all added another £4,950 onto the price.

My other niggles with the BMW are fairly minor; I found that with my phone charger plugged into the power socket shifting into fifth gear was almost impossible and the tonneau cover has a nasty habit of automatically popping up to form a sort of peak when you open the boot which does allow easier access to the cavernous luggage space but, as it doesn't automatically drop back down again, it severely hampers your rear view unless you remember to fix it manually.

None of these slight irritations could take away from the fact that the BMW 5 Series Touring is a solid all round performer. And there's that word again... solid. It really is the perfect description for this car.

Tony Meredith