

# CLASSIC DRIVER

## BMW 6 Series Gran Coupé



**With the Mercedes CLS, Porsche Panamera and Aston Martin Rapide achieving widespread praise over the last few years, BMW has finally - albeit belatedly - jumped into the four-door coupé niche with its new 6 Series Gran Coupé.**

Arriving on a battle scene already in full swing, the Gran Coupé will be the third model in the 6 Series range, joining the two-door Coupé and Convertible variants. Surprisingly, it's scheduled for a Spring 2012 debut, which will ensure that the entirely new body variant arrives before the M6 halo car based on the existing models.

The four-door sports coupé has seemed an obvious omission in the BMW product line-up for some time, with the likes of the Panamera, Rapide and Maserati Quattroporte all enjoying sales success - not to mention the thriving Mercedes CLS, now well into its second generation.



BMW hasn't exactly overlooked the idea of a four-door coupé: in fact, the CS design concept previewed the marque's interpretation of such a car back in 2007. But despite a warm reception the idea was dropped, likely falling victim to the bean-counters and their concerns about the financial meltdown and its impact on demand for large, luxury cars.



Despite this, the company has since invented a new über-niche with its 5 Series GT (raising a fair share of eyebrows in the process), but the Gran Coupé has obviously now made a strong business case for itself and will slot nicely into an existing segment. A length of just over five metres means the elegant sports saloon is a tad larger than what will surely be its main competitors, the Mercedes CLS and Audi A7.

The front and rear design mirrors that of its two-doored siblings. "BMW stands for a sporty design with a long wheelbase, muscular forms and short overhangs," according to BMW design director Adrian van Hooydonk. So it's within the wheelbase - elongated by 113mm - that the majority of changes have taken place.





The latest 6 Series derivative comfortably seats four people, although BMW claims a fifth can straddle the extension of the centre console which meets the rear seat bench. Room in the back appears ample, and the rear seats can be folded down to increase cargo space from 460 to 1,265 litres - unheard of in a 6 Series until now. But at the front end of the car, the Gran Coupé will have much in common with its compatriots. Engine options are identical, with a choice of two petrol powerplants (a 320HP 640i or the range-topping 650i with its 450HP V8) and a diesel (313HP 640d), all of which are turbocharged.

Whichever you choose, the 6 Series Gran Coupé will have an 8-speed ZF automatic transmission with start/stop technology, as well as electronic dampers, electric leather seats, xenon lights and a premium Bang & Olufsen hi-fi. In true BMW fashion the options list is plentiful, allowing the addition of numerous assistance systems and comfort features. Prices start at around £61,380.





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Photos: BMW

## Gallery











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