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Honda Civic Saloon – Road Test

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Honda adds another string to the Civic's bow...

... says David Miles (Miles Better News Agency).

With no Estate version in the tenth generation Honda Civic range, until now only available in five door Hatchback form, now Honda has extended the Civic's appeal by adding four door Saloon versions. Unlike the Hatchback and Type R built in the UK for global sales, the Civic Saloon is built in Turkey for European markets.

Available with 1.0 litre three cylinder 129 hp turbo petrol and 1.6 four cylinder 120 hp turbodiesel engines the Civic Saloon has prices ranging from £19,395 to £27,120. Unlike the Civic Hatchback the 1.5 litre four cylinder turbo 182 hp petrol engine is not included in the range, reflecting the demand in the fleet/business sales sector, where the Saloon is predominately aimed, for lower emission engines for tax reasons. Civic Hatchback prices for comparable engine and spec levels are £290 less than the new Saloon models. Both engines



are available with manual or automatic transmission option.

Starting from just 91 g/km CO2 for the 1.6 i-DTEC diesel manual, this version can deliver up to 83.1 mpg, and the diesel automatic 68.9 mpg with CO2 emissions of 108 g/km. The 1.0-litre petrol version is relatively clean with 107 g/km CO2 for the CVT auto while the manual petrol emits just 110 g/km CO2. The petrol engine is also fuel-efficient, delivering up to 58.9 mpg for the manual and 60.1 mpg for the CVT auto.

Trim levels for now mirror those of the existing mainstream Hatchback model (no Type R version) with SE, SR and EX levels. The entry SE grade comes with Honda SENSING suite of safety features, collision mitigation braking system, forward collision warning, lane keep assist, lane departure warning, road departure mitigation, adaptive cruise control and traffic sign recognition. The SR grade adds rain sensing auto wipers, dual climate control air conditioning, parking sensors and Honda CONNECT (Apple CarPlay and Android Auto) and a rear parking camera. The EX trim further includes leather seats, smart entry and start, LED headlights with washers, LED fog lights, wireless phone charging and heated rear seats.

Because of the popularity of the SR grade with the Saloon body from the end of this year onwards that will be the only spec level offered with the diesel engine. It currently takes 70% of Civic Saloon sales compared with 44% of Civic Hatchback registrations.



When it comes to sales numbers Honda UK do not release such figures, other than saying that the UK market is the largest for Honda sales in Europe accounting for 35% of their 100,000 new cars sold in Europe. The current Honda range line up consists of the Jazz supermini, Civic Hatchback/Saloon, HR-V compact SUV, CR-V larger SUV and the NSX supercar.

However Honda did say that 80% of Civic Saloon sales will go to corporate buyers (fleet/user-choosers) as opposed to 49% for the Civic Hatchback where 51% are retail sales. Of the two engines on offer for the new Civic Saloon 60% of customers will opt for the new diesel engine as opposed to 40% for the Hatchback. The diesel sales split between manual and auto transmissions is 50/50, similar to the Hatchback.



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Visually the four door Civic Saloon is almost a mirror image of the five door Hatchback with both having a steeply raked rear end. Whereas the Hatchback has a tailgate the Saloon has a boot lid which is in effect an extended section of the lower half of the Hatchback's tailgate. Both body versions of the Civic utilise a sleek sports coupé side profile with sharply sculptured panels and styling lines. The front wings and rear haunches are bold, giving the car a strong muscular stance, enhancing the sporting appearance as does the neat boot lid integrated spoiler.

The Hatchback has a boot offering 478 litres (16.88 cu.ft) but the Saloon's is larger at 519 litres (18.24 cu.ft). With the rear seats folded there is 1,267 litres (44.74 cu.ft) of space for the Hatchback and 1,308 litres (46.19 cu.ft) for the Saloon, and both body styles have a very useable flat load floor with the rear seats folded down.



2018 Civic four door Like the Hatchback the Saloon offers lots of rear seat legroom and of particular praise are the seats which are comfortable front and rear. With its 4,648 mm (15.25 ft) of body length the Civic Saloon, like the Hatchback, fits between the traditional C-segment and D-Segment models in terms of length. They are similar in size to say a BMW 3-Series Saloon but longer than a VW Golf Hatchback or Audi A3 Saloon, but none of these match the Skoda Octavia Hatchback for rear legroom and boot space.

Generally the interior quality and layout of switches and controls of the Civic Saloon is reasonable but there are areas of hard plastic trim, although it's an easy and comfortable interior to live with. The usual Apple CarPlay and Android Auto connectivity systems available through the Honda CONNECT with Carmin 7 touchscreen navigation system provide all the tools needed for the busy long distance company car drivers, who will gain most benefit from the Civic Saloon with its new fuel and tax-efficient diesel engine. SR spec items of particular note are the 17-inch alloy wheels, dual zone air-con, rear parking



camera, front and rear parking sensors, auto lights/wipers power folding and heated door mirrors and halogen front fog lights.

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The 1.6 litre 120 hp power output is relatively modest but the 300 Nm (221 lb.ft) of torque at 2,000 rpm makes it a responsive unit if full use is made of the gearbox, especially as fifth and sixth gears are overdrive ratios to achieve good fuel economy. Top speed is 125 mph and zero to 62 mph takes 10.0 seconds. With the six-speed manual gearbox the official Combined Cycle fuel economy figure is 83.2 mpg, with CO2 emissions of just 91 g/km. This currently means VED First Year diesel road tax costs £145 and then £140 Standard rate. From April next year it will be £130 and £145 respectively. The all-important BiK company car tax rate is 23% now, and the same from April next year. Insurance is Group 19E and warranty three years/90,000 miles.

All those figures are similar to those of the Civic Hatchback diesel I drove recently, but in real life driving conditions the Hatchback only returned 55.6mpg. The diesel Saloon, for some unknown reason, during my recent road test driving, covering local roads and a motorway cruise, returned a much more impressive 71 mpg.

In all other respects, except two very important ones, the Civic Saloon in diesel form carries over its driving abilities of other Civic models. The big difference with the Saloon is far better ride quality and less fidgety handling. Gone are the hard riding characteristics of the Hatchback with the Saloon's softer damper settings being better suited for UK roads. The Saloon also doesn't have adaptive dampers - which didn't do the Hatchback model any favours. The Saloon's rear suspension also didn't have the same issue as the Hatchbacks where the rear end suspension was upset by poor surfaces and ridges in the road surfaces which caused the car to fidget about rather than run a smooth controlled line. The Saloon's composed handling and more comfortable qualities will be a significant benefit to high mileage drivers and their passengers.



VERDICT

The improved ride quality and better handling are the most significant benefits the Saloon has over the Hatchback; these plus the excellent fuel economy, low taxes and smart Saloon car kerb appeal.

For: Excellent real-life driving fuel economy, attractive tax costs, sensible and practical equipment level, roomy rear seat legroom and boot/load space, much better compliant ride quality and less fidgety body control than the Civic Hatchbacks, long mileage warranty, easy to live with for high mileage users.

Against: Noisy engine note under load, reduced choice of spec levels from the end of this year for the Civic Saloon but not the Hatchbacks.



Milestones and Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

New Honda Civic 1.6 i-DTEC SR manual, turbodiesel, four door Saloon (best selling Saloon model).

Price: £22,795 (£23,320 as tested).

Engine/transmission: New 1.6 litre, four cylinder turbodiesel with 120 hp and 300 Nm (221 lb.ft) of torque from 2,000 rpm, six speed manual.

Performance: 125 mph, 0-62mph 10.0 seconds.



Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 83.1 mpg (71 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 91 g/km, currently First Year diesel rate VED road tax £145 then £140 Standard rate, BiK company car tax 23%.

Insurance Group: 19E.

Warranty: Three years/90,000 miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,648 mm (15.25 ft), W 1,799 mm (5.90 ft), H 1,416 mm (4.65 ft), wheelbase 2,697 mm (8.85 ft), boot/load space 519 to 1,308 litres (18.24 to 46.19 cu.ft), four doors/five seats.