Honda Civic e:HEV Advance – Road Test

Published: March 25, 2024

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Online version: https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/honda-civic-ehev-advance-road-test/



Robin Roberts (and WheelsWithinWales) fully assesses the Advance version of Honda's family favourite Civic...

Honda has a lot of pride in the Civic, and it's justified.

Honda started making Civic models in 1972, nine years after it expanded from motor-bikes into cars with the N360 and then the 1300, and Civic put the brand on the world map for

automobiles. So the Civic is the company's longest established and arguably best known model, which also spurred development of the larger Honda Accord and undoubtedly influenced many European rivals' designs.

It was produced in Swindon for two decades, ending in 2022, and the current series is assembled in Japan.

Today, the Honda Civic is sold in Britain in a very limited range from the Elegance at just under £35,000, through the Sport for about £36,500 to the Advance we tested from £39,795 for MY24 as well as the overtly sporting Type R version at a heady £50,000.

Our Advance model comes with the latest technical features including intelligent headlights with LED foglights, 10.2 inch digital display, heated steering wheel, powered front seats, big sunroof, sports pedals with mix of synthetic and leather upholstery, rear air conditioning and 12 speakers.

This small, carefully packaged range nevertheless has wide appeal and earned the Civic commendation at the 2024 Business Motoring Awards earlier this year.

The powertrain is common to the three models and its refinement, economy and sophistication is very good for business drivers.


HONDA

It is not the quickest in its class but it must rank as probably the smoothest and most sophisticated while being remarkably frugal overall which meant we saw a staggering 81mpg for a few steady motorway miles.

From standstill, pick up is brisk and it quickly builds as the petrol engine and electric motor join forces, giving good mid-range acceleration and then offering very good long-legged cruising on main roads and motorways.

The CVT was effortless, simply push buttons to go forward, backwards or park with an electric parking brake to assist on slopes. By the nature of their technology, the belt-driven transmission is not the quickest but what it lacks in neck-snapping urge, it compensates with seamless, quiet performance.

Really progressive assistance from the steering permitted pin-sharp precision at speed even if it was a bit heavy to park in urban areas. The brakes were highly effective slowing the Civic from any speed without drama or too much pressure.



Secondary controls around the wheel were close to hand, the driver's display was simple, clear and fairly well marked although not large. This was matched by a significantly larger infotainment display in the centre of the dash for a multitude of functions but thankfully the heating and ventilation system was controlled by its own switches beneath this big colourful array.

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The sound system was very good for a car in this class and music lovers will appreciate the wide range and strong, finely balanced output from the speakers.

I was a bit surprised by the sparse oddments room throughout in what is a family car with small compartments of differing shapes and not a lot of depth.

The Civic’s loadspace was good, very quickly tripling in total when the offset split backseats were progressively dropped. Access to the boot behind a low lip was easy and you could also reach into that through the back doors.


CIVIC

For driver and passengers it was slightly tight getting in or out due to the low roof and sloping A-pillar and some may find the rear headroom on the short side, but infront there was a lot of room.

The seats, heated infront on the Advance, were extremely comfortable with a lot of adjustment, deep cushions and wrap around backrests as well as power assistance to finely select the most suitable settings.



Ride feeling was slightly biased towards firmness but it was not hard except over the very worst bumps and potholes and it generally coped very well with undulations and ripples on the road.

Handling was surefooted and predictable, more like a rear wheel drive car than the Civic's front wheel power play and it turned into bends and then stuck to the road in a reassuring manner. Lifting off mid-corner did not produce any tail lift.

Noise levels were extremely low, the occasional road rumble or bump from suspension being the most noticeable sounds. Even pushing the engine into higher rev ranges did not make it too intrusive, just enjoyable.

What did leave a lasting impression of this very competent all-rounder was its effortless ability to cover miles with modest thirst for fuel. Overall we recorded 51 mpg but consistently saw it heading up to or over 60 mpg on some trips and even a remarkable 81 mpg on one journey for several miles.

VERDICT

The Civic is Honda's oldest model but it has moved with the times, responded to changing demands, taste and legislation and is still a highly desirable car that can show many newcomers a clean pair of wheel-tracks where it matters.

For: Excellent ride & handling, very sophisticated powertrain, quality & comfortable interior, very economical.

Against: Road noise, modest oddments space, limited rear headroom, average performance, small range.



FAST FACTS

Model: Honda Civic e:HEV Advance

Price: £37,120 *(see text)*

Mechanical: 143 PS 4 cyl 2.0 petrol-hybrid, CVT

Max Speed: 112 mph

0 – 6 2mph: 8.1 secs

Combined MPG: 51

Insurance Group: 28

C02 emissions: 114 g/km

Bik rating: 27%, £200FY, £170SR

Warranty: 5 years/ 90,000 miles

Size: L 4.56 m (14.96 ft), W 1.81 m (5.94 ft), H 1.41 m (4.63 ft)

Bootspace: 404 to 1,187 litres (14.27 to 41.92 cu.ft)

Kerbweight: 1,533 kg (3,380 lb)

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