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## Honda Civic e:HEV – Road Test

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A LONGER DRIVE IN THE NEW HONDA CIVIC e:HEV...

...By Robin Roberts (and Miles Better News Agency).



Sometimes we look forward to long journeys with trepidation and other times with anticipation, and it was definitely the latter in the Honda Civic e:HEV.

I briefly tested the new Honda Civic e:HEV family sized hatchback a few weeks earlier at the UK media launch but a longer time in the new car, which included a 320 miles round trip in just a few hours, was going to be confirmation of my initial impression or realisation that in the short media drive I had got it wrong.

I need not have worried of course. The latest Honda Civic e:HEV (a self-charging hybrid) is a very worthy successor to the previous numerous Civic series and is now a larger, smoother and more refined model and by some margin.

Honda has invested a lot in the new Civic and gone to some extraordinary lengths with its engineers evaluating every aspect of the car, and it shows. It is the first Honda to use an electric transmission without gears, for example.

The Honda Civic was introduced 50 years ago and the new e:HEV is the 11th generation after 27.5 million have been sold in 170 countries, but it really is a turning point for the car maker as we embark on the new generation of electrically assisted and powered cars.

There are three trim levels, Elegance, Sport and Advance, sharing the same powertrain and are identical in performance terms so differentiate with fitted equipment and price.





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The entry level Elegance from £29,595 includes keyless entry, heated mirrors and front seats, nine-inch touchscreen infotainment, parking sensors and rear-view camera while the mid-spec Sport from £30,595 adds air-conditioning, synthetic leather and fabric upholstery, wireless charging, LED front lights and the £32,995 Advance tops the range with adaptive headlights, powered synthetic-leather seats and heated wheel, glass sunroof, 10.2 inch digital display, BOSE 12-speaker sound system and upgraded wheels. Honda is giving a £1,000 deposit contribution and 5 yrs servicing with initial orders, plus 6.9% APR and PCP payments from £349 to £399.



No longer built in Britain, it comes to us from the company's Yorri Plant, Japan and is the latest model on Honda's declared road to fully electric or fuel-cell cars by 2040. Honda has committed to introducing 30 new battery electric vehicles over the next eight years. These will include two exciting SUVs and for Honda a first time Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicle for selected markets and five new models will arrive within 18 months.

Much of the design inspiration for the new car was taken from the third generation 1983 Civic with its very airy cabin and sleek light body but translated into modern requirements and flowing lines with clear sightlines.

The new Civic has a longer wheelbase, wider rear track and is lower than the outgoing series giving it both a firmer foothold and improved handling as well as a sharper look.





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The increased size of the new Civic and the electric motor would normally add weight to the car but it's been mitigated utilising a resin tailgate and aluminium bonnet as well as a compact electric transmission that has no traditional gears, saving parts and servicing.

The external lines have been mirrored inside with few breaks in panels and a neat mesh panel to the face of the wide dashboard while all switches and handles have been engineered to give the best feeling to fingers for pulling or turning and pressure behind





buttons.

There's a power meter fitted into the instruments' display instead of a rev counter alongside the more familiar speedometer. The central display is larger than in the current model and was very easy to use, with separate heating and ventilation buttons beneath.





There is just a single 2.0 litre four cylinder petrol engine and pure electric variable transmission. Only the front wheels are driven and deceleration or braking generates regenerative charging back to the power battery which can add a little to the pure ev range.





Honda engineers are enthusiasts through and through and it really shows in what is really a family hatchback because the way the power is created, delivered and put down on the road has been given a strong driver and performance feel and there is even an acoustic engine sound to enhance that.

The suspension has a sporty feel but it's still very comfortable over any road surface and the new monocoque structure is stiffer which helps with ride quality, reduced twisting and sharper handling.

Inside the Civic e:HEV looks a class above its category with clean lines, good textured





controls and very clear instruments with minimum distractions for the driver. Visibility was excellent through the windows, with a very good wash/ wipe system and long range, wide-beam headlights at night, but you need care when reversing as the high tail and thick c-pillars restrict line of sight.

Seats were extremely comfortable and had good adjustment range on the front pair, good room and were nicely shaped.

Headroom was good throughout but some taller people may find the legroom a bit short in the back. Seats have an offset split to progressively raise the luggage capacity to a maximum 1,220 litres (43.03 cu.ft).

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Access was good throughout and the low waistline and deep windows give the cabin a bright appearance as well as reduce blindspots but you have sensors and a reversing camera as standard. There is no sunroof on the two lower grades, but a decent sized glass panel on the top Advance grade, which also gets heated steering wheel and intelligent headlights among its trim items.

Behind the wheel, the acceleration begins with electric assistance, silent and swift, and the system decides when it needs to bring in the petrol engine, so hums in the background if extra urge is needed before switching to the internal combustion engine for longer motorway journeys.

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Honda has incorporated regenerative braking so energy is pushed back to the traction battery when slowing. It all works very well and without the concern of range anxiety of pure evs...

## VERDICT

Everything comes together very well from a driver's viewpoint with good minor controls, clear instruments, responsive powertrain and well weighted steering, compliant suspension and strong brakes. There is little to dislike.

It's 50 years since Honda started the Civic line and with the improvements made in the new Civic e:HEV you wonder where they will be in another five decades, but that's a journey we cannot be sure about either, although I think it will be as exciting.

For: Very roomy in front, comfortable seats, clear instruments, easy to drive, extremely smooth and responsive with good grip and economical, no driving range anxiety.

Against: Quiet engine and powertrain meant road noises were exaggerated and for a family car there was not a lot of oddments space throughout the cabin and rear legroom may be tight for taller users.



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## FAST FACTS

Honda Civic e:HEV Sport hatchback





Price: £31,220, inc. options

Mechanical: 2.0 litre 143 PS petrol 4 cyl engine with 184 PS electric motor & electric transmission to front wheels

Max Speed: 112 mph

0 - 62 mph: 7.9 sec

Combined MPG: 52.2

Insurance Group: 28E



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C02 emissions: 113 g/km

Tax costs: Bik rating 27%, VED £180FY, £155SR

Warranty: 3 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: 415 to 1,220 litres (14.66 to 43.08 cu.ft)

Kerbweight: 1,533 kg (3,379 lb)