Honda CR-V HEV 4WD – Road Test

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Robin Roberts (WheelsWithinWales) puts the CR-V through its paces…

Honda’s product range is one of the most diverse on the market but it’s all steadily heading in one direction towards pure battery power over the next few years.

In the meantime, and probably being very wise to hedge bets about the roll out of the

battery electric vehicle industry, Honda has given us the widest choice and the family friendly CR-V series.

The Honda CR-V was launched in 1995 as the Japanese manufacturer wanted to capitalise on the rapidly developing SUV sector and it was made in Swindon for a number of years before the plant closed.

It is the largest Honda SUV sold in Britain and was the most popular model worldwide from the brand over six generations.



Honda’s Compact Recreational Vehicle is sold in both front and all wheel drive forms in Britain, in Elegance and Advance trims, and marks the gradual shift towards pure battery

power with the self-charging version we tested or plug-in hybrid models today.

It is derived from the latest Civic platform and thereby related to the HRV models, so buyers have the widest choice of bodies for families. If you're minded to go all-electric, then the e:Ny1 could be right up your drive, but otherwise the CR-V is a very good alternative, albeit more polluting than its green stablemate.

I like mild hybrids because you don't have to really think about using traction battery power as the system sorts it out and then boosts itself as you drive along. If minded you can use a sort of rocker switch on the transmission tunnel to extract more power or stretch out the battery reserve. It's simple, effective and trouble-free.

Honda's familiar four-cylinder 2.0 litre petrol engine is a model of smoothness and quietness, almost being inaudible at times when modestly cruising.



Kick down the throttle to overtake or compensate for a higher load and the engine's instant response is boosted by the electric motor, or rather twin motors in the case of our test car.

Unfortunately its also carrying quite a bit of weight and combined with some long-legged gearing the acceleration suffers, as does the maximum speed indicated.

Balance booting it with being more light-footed and the economy easily exceeds 40 mpg, but in a rapid trip we saw it plunge to 29 mpg. Use it or abuse it at your pleasure.

And pleasure it generally was with very comfortable, large seats and an impressive amount of legroom throughout.



The rear seats did not fold completely flat to quickly extend the luggage area, but the space was generous and the boot floor was low to ease putting things in or pulling out.



Access to the cabin was easy as well and the climate controls kept everything as desired with plenty of ventilation and heating options.

Oddments room was good throughout as well for a family car and five should be able to enjoy it and have space behind for their luggage or sports equipment.

For the driver everything fell immediately to hand, the steering was well balanced, the brakes strong yet smooth and the automatic transmission very smooth acting and changing.



Secondary controls were around the wheel or close on the fascia and console and the straightforward instruments were big, clear and well marked.

Infotainment features accessed through the central display were comprehensive with a repeater system infront of the driver for essential details very welcome.

Visibility was good to the front and sides, not so unobstructed to the rear, wipers and wash were effective and lights reasonably bright for some wintry country roads.

The CR-V's ride was slightly firm but not uncomfortable, just noisy over bad bits of tarmac. Occasionally it would jar over deeper potholes or higher tarmac ridges but overall it was good with a hint of body roll on tight bends.

Having all-wheel-drive beneath you inspires confidence on our wintry roads and the handling was very surefooted.



Noise levels were low unless the road surface was particularly coarse or the engine was pushed into the higher half of its range.

The outward appearance of the Honda CR-V is fairly standard with few highlights to set it apart from rivals while the interior is definitely designed with practicality and longevity in mind, not looking eye-catching.

Honda could do a lot better with its interior design to match its engineering expertise without compromising on durability. It would certainly improve its desirability.

The biggest obstacle to overcome is the price of the CR-V. It is probably fairly competitive with rivals but still a lot of money for private buyers and the road tax bills for five years are high.

VERDICT

Costs aside, the Honda CR-V HEV 4WD exudes engineering excellence and feels bullet-proof.

For: Very well made, sound & smooth mechanicals, practical roomy interior and boot space, easy drive.

Against: Expensive price and tax class, underpowered for what it can do, boring interior.



FAST FACTS

Model: Honda CR-V HEV 4WD

Price: £49,670

Mechanical: 148 ps 4 cyl 2.0 litre petrol-hybrid AWD

Max Speed: 116 mph

0 – 62 mph: 9.5 secs

Combined MPG: 43 mpg

Insurance Group: 34

C02 emissions: 151 g/km

Bik rating: 35%, £635FY, £560SRx5

Warranty: 5 years/90,000 miles

Size: L 4.71 m (15.45 ft), W 2.16 m (7.09 ft), H 1.69 m (5.54 ft)

Bootspace: 579 – 1,643 litres (20.45 to 58.02 cu.ft)

Kerbweight: 1,818 kg (4,008 lb)

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