Honda HR-V Road Test

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Keith Ward assesses Honda's HR-V...

IF you are recalling an HR-V badge from Honda's past, it was on a model launched just before the millennium, which struggled for success and finally nose-dived in 2006.

Fast forward to last summer and into UK showrooms bearing the same badge dashed this purposeful-looking all-new model for which better things are hoped. It's priced and sized between the smaller Jazz and bigger CR-V, both popular, whose success could rub off on the newcomer. However, the Japanese company is looking for 70 per cent of customers to switch from other brands.

The new HR-V is variously described as an SUV or subcompact or crossover or occasionally all three. These are confused times in auto world marketing. While elevated above

hatchback level, you obviously do not sit as high as in the commanding CR-V. Class-leading interior space, Honda claims for the HR-V. Rear legroom is certainly good; head and shoulder room all round just about adequate for five average adults.

Once again, Honda scores for its “magic” versatile seating. Those behind, as well as folding down into a flat extension of the boot floor, offer plump cushions which can instead be tipped back, theatre-style to give 1,240 mm (over four feet) floor-to-roof standing space right across the car. All this allowed by shifting the fuel tank forward – why don’t other designers think of this? Also, the front passenger seat can fold back to horizontal, so allowing items 2,445 mm (8 feet) long. Full marks.



The boot floor itself is bi-level, plus a deep basement well where a spare wheel has been supplanted by an emergency inflator kit. Otherwise storage is hit and miss – no useful bins in the rear wheel arches, nothing to stop your goods sliding around, narrow door pockets, but a double box between the front seats and unexpected space below the bridge carrying the gear lever.

At £17,995 the HR-V starts £4,500 above the Jazz and £4,775 below the CR-V. An 11-strong HR-V range rises through four trim levels to £24,945 for the top 118 bhp 1.6 diesel EX manual we drove. There is no 4WD option for the HR-V, while automatic is reserved for the

128 bhp 1.5 petrol alternative.

That EX trim gets you exclusively a plush leather interior, heated front seats, a panoramic opening glass roof, roof rails, rear privacy glass, key-less entry and starting, LED headlights and daytime running lights plus a rear view camera.

They add to features inherited from lower down the range, such as the highly-rated Garmin navigation and multi-function seven-inch swipe and tap touch-screen (takes getting used to), dual zone climate, six-speaker audio (which thankfully retains a CD player, for those with collections from that era), as well as bang up-to-date app integration and internet browsing. There's automatic braking in city traffic, eight airbags, cruise control and parking sensors. Added-cost options even include retro running boards for the oldies, to ease access-egress.

An owner I know who downsized from his cherished CR-V complains of the HR-V's weak reversing lights to see him out of his garage, otherwise remains steadfastly faithful to Honda. And now he's got used to the HR-V, he muses, reflecting on the £8,000 he saved.

On the road, the HR-V sits and drives well if not spectacularly (0-62 in 10.5 seconds). The diesel makes itself heard early on when pushed, before relaxing for motorway cruising and it ended a week's unsparing motoring recording nigh on 60 mpg.

Latest: A recent consumer survey of 30,000 European drivers owning 178 different models rated Honda the most reliable brand.



WHEELS-ALIVE TECH. SPEC. IN BRIEF:

Honda HR-V 1.6 i-DTEC EXSUV subcompact crossover; 5 doors; 5 seats.

Engine: Diesel; 1.6 litres.

Transmission: 6 speed manual gearbox; front wheel drive; stop-start.

Power: 120 PS @ 4,000 rpm.

Max. torque: 300 Nm (221 lb.ft) @ 2,000 rpm.

Performance:

0-62 mph: 10.5 secs.

Top speed: 119 mph.

Dimensions: Length 4,294 mm (14.1 ft); width 1,772 (5.8 ft); ht 1,605 (5.3 ft).

Boot: Length 810 to 1,520 mm (2.7 to 5.0 ft); min width 990 mm (3.2 ft); volume 470 to 1,533 litres (16.6 to 54.1 cu.ft).

Safety: Top 5 stars in latest Euro NCAP tests.

Wheels and Tyres: 215/55 tyres on 17-inch alloys.

Fuel consumption: On test 56.9 mpg; official Combined 68.9 mpg.

Emissions and taxation: CO2, 108 g/km; tax band B; VED Nil then £20.

Price: £24,945 (as tested with options, £25,470). Rivals Nissan Juke, Peugeot 2008, Skoda Yeti.