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Honda HR-V Sport (CVT) – Road Test

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Sporty in nature, innovative and so very user-friendly with its wonderful 'Magic Seats' - it's Honda's HR-V.

Kim Henson test drives the Sport version, with seven-speed CVT transmission...

(All words and photographs by Kim).

Boldly styled, with impressive performance credentials and excellent practicality, the latest versions of Honda's HR-V have much to offer in today's crowded market for compact SUVs.



However, before looking closely at the current HR-V line up, it's worth mentioning that the first Honda bearing that name arrived in 1999. I was fortunate enough to attend the car's launch (for UK motoring writers) in Barcelona in February that year, and, along with fellow motoring writers present, thought that the HR-V was an interesting and unique newcomer.

The 1.6 litre petrol-powered compact crossover/SUV was based on Honda's Logo supermini platform, and provided fresh, unmistakable three door styling plus genuine everyday practicality and was fun to drive. Indeed, in Honda's advertising of the time it was described as the 'Joy Machine'.

The first generation models were produced until 2006, and were offered with three or five doors, and with front wheel drive or 'Real Time' four wheel drive, with the all wheel drive system automatically engaging when required.

Fast forward 20 years from the original car's introduction and the HR-V has evolved, with second generation models bearing the name arriving in 2014.

Very different in many ways from their well-respected predecessors, the newcomers featured up-to-the-minute styling and technology, yet retained high levels of practicality that were also notable in the original design.

Today...

The current HR-V range starts at £20,040 and rises to £29,090 (for the Sport version with CVT transmission, as tested for this feature). All models in the line-up have five door bodywork and front wheel drive (only).

Engine options are 1.5 i-VTEC petrol (naturally aspirated or turbocharged), or 1.6 i-DTEC turbo diesel. Incidentally, 'i-VTEC' stands for 'intelligent - Variable Valve Timing and Lift Electronic Control).

Transmissions available are six speed manual or seven speed CVT automatic (but this is not



offered on the diesel versions).

Trim levels rise from S through SE and EX to Sport, which is only available in conjunction with the turbocharged petrol engine.



The most recent versions of the HR-V feature 'dynamic' styling enhancements, revised LED lamps with projector lenses for the headlamps (on the more upmarket versions) and three underbody covers to improve air flow for better fuel consumption.

Interior Improvements



Changes to the front seat design for the latest HR-Vs provide improved comfort for the driver and passenger.



Unseen but also helpful, there is enhanced soundproofing in the bulkhead area, wheel arches and luggage compartment.

The use of high quality materials (including two tone half-leather/half-fabric upholstery) throughout the interior of the Sport test car provided an air of opulence.

My Sport version featured a seven inch touch screen system in the centre of the fascia, and there was a wealth of standard-fit connectivity systems; further individual personalisation is possible too.



State of the art safety systems abound... As examples, 'Honda SENSING' provides Collision Mitigation Braking with Pedestrian Detection, Forward Collision Warning (FCW), Highbeam Support System, intelligent - Adaptive Cruise Control with Cut-in Prediction, intelligent - Speed Limiter, Lane Departure Warning with Road Departure Mitigation, Front and rear emergency locking retractor (ELR) seat belts, and a Traffic Sign Recognition System.

This is in addition to a wealth of airbags, a multitude of braking and stability aids, Blind Spot Information, Cross Traffic Monitor and whiplash-reducing head restraints - and so on.

Comprehensive kit

I don't propose to quote all the standard comfort and convenience features found on the HR-V Sport, but among the items on a very long list are...

A tilt/telescopically-adjustable steering wheel, rain-sensing automatic screen wipers, automatic operation of the lights, electrically adjustable/retractable/heated door mirrors, satellite navigation, a six speaker audio system, a headlamp 'follow home' function, 'Sport' and 'Econ' driving modes, and, on the CVT versions like my test car, gearchange 'paddles' for changing ratios manually when desired.

All that's before we get to the 'Magic Seats'...

Inside Story - the Epitome of Versatility

One of the most notable, clever and very welcome features of today's HR-V is the 'Magic Seat' system, which works in a similar manner to that of the highly-acclaimed Jazz.

In the HR-V the rear floor of the vehicle is much lower than is usual with 'normal' SUVs, due primarily to location of the fuel tank centrally beneath the vehicle, and helped by the compact rear suspension set-up.

In this way additional space beneath the rear seats becomes available, and has enabled



Honda to build in their 'Magic Seats' system...

The rear seats, divided 60/40, can easily and rapidly be set up in a variety of different ways, enabling HR-V owners to use the car in many different roles.

'Utility' mode:

Simply by pressing two buttons (there's one each side) on the top of the rear seat back sections, both seats fold forwards, forming a long, wide and perfectly flat floor - 1,845 mm (72.64 inches) long - on which to carry luggage. Reverting to passenger-carrying duties is just as quick and straightforward. When required, one section or other of the rear seat can be left in place to vary the passenger/load carrying options as required.

'Tall' mode:

To engage this mode the front of the rear seat base is lifted and the seat base is secured in the upright position, thus providing a useful space behind the front seats, for carrying tall items. In fact the available height is some 1,240 mm (48.82 inches).

'Long' mode:

To gain the maximum available load-carrying length within the vehicle, the front passenger seat back is folded backwards to the horizontal, and the appropriate section of the rear seat back is folded forwards, to give a maximum load length of 2,445 mm (96.26 inches).

It is worth noting too that even in 'normal' SUV mode the luggage compartment is spacious, sensibly-shaped and accommodating. For a start the load sill is only 650 mm (25.59 inches) above ground level, the tailgate opening width is a generous 1,180 mm (46.46 inches) and even with all three rear seats occupied, the available load capacity is a useful 431 litres (15.22 cu.ft). Fold forward all the rear seats (once their occupants have left the car, of course...) and the capacity is extended to a huge 1,437 litres (50.75 cu.ft).



Within the base of the boot is an easy-to-clean protective flexible cover, protecting the floor carpet and ideal for temporarily accommodating wet or muddy umbrellas, boots, etc.

Beneath the boot floor is a separate shallow compartment, perfect for housing small items that need to be stored out of the way.

This slideshow requires JavaScript.

There's no spare wheel, but an emergency kit is provided to provide some assistance, should a tyre deflate...

On Test

During my time with the HR-V, everyone who travelled in it commented favourably about the smart and welcoming soft-touch two tone upholstery, the comfortable seats (and with a centre folding arm rest in the rear seat), also the generous leg and head room throughout



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Getting



into and out of the car was easy too, courtesy of the wide-opening front and rear doors.

They also liked the variety of storage spaces within the car, including a large glove box, multi-space centre console, door bins (longer in the front doors than the rear) and the elasticated pockets in the backs of the front seats.



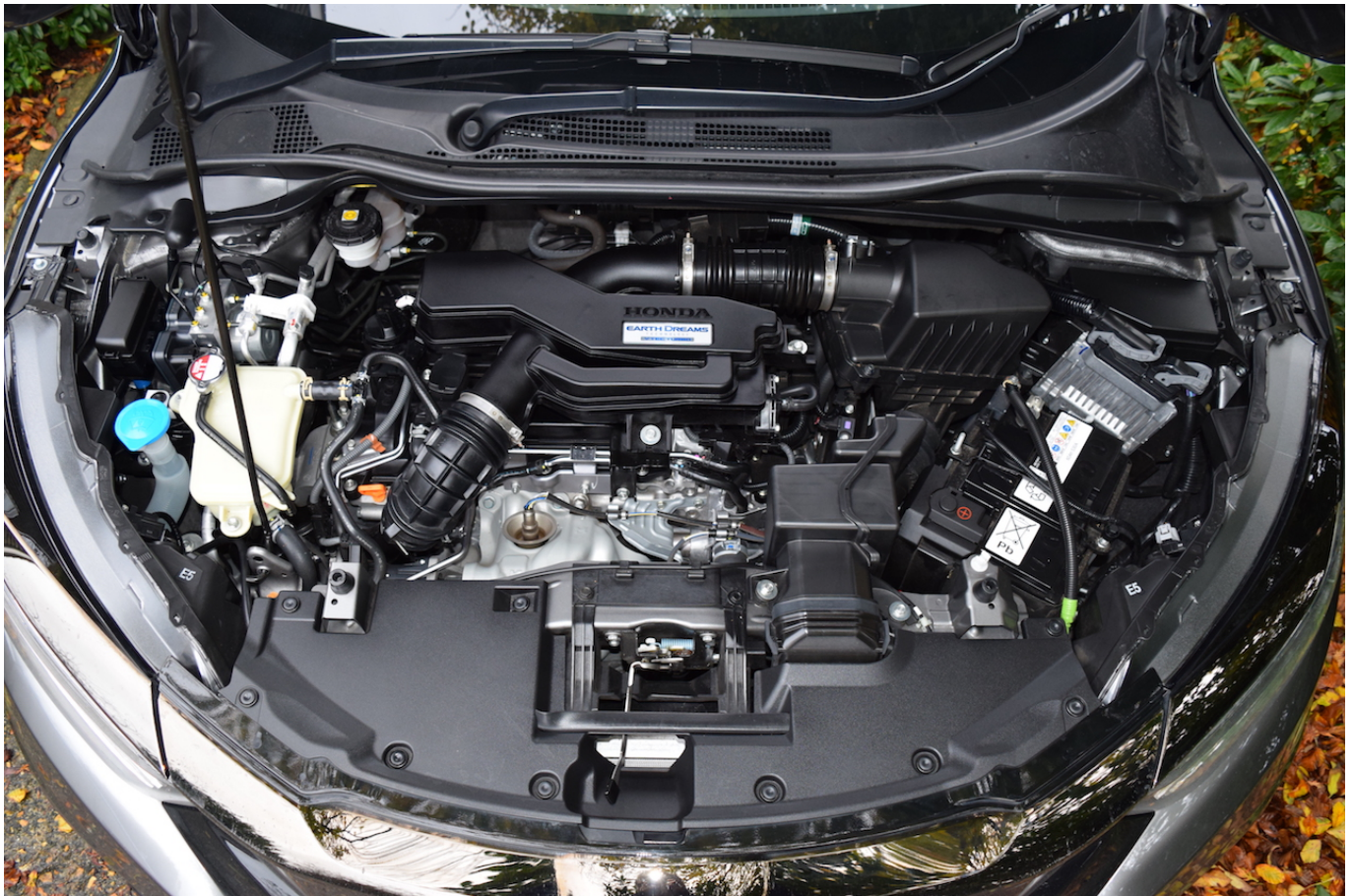
From a driver's perspective, I liked the height-adjustable seat, giving a good view of the road ahead. Vision towards the rear of the car was not so good, with high rear body side panels impeding the view, but thankfully the built-in reversing camera and proximity sensors help.

I also liked the ideal weighting of the variable ratio, electrically-assisted power steering.



This provided plenty of feedback at speed, as well as useful assistance when parking and making tight manouvres in urban situations.

The engine proved to be a delight. Similar to the unit powering the manual transmission Civic Sport that I tested recently, in producing 182 bhp, when mated to the seven speed CVT automatic transmission, it is set up to develop a little less torque but over a wider rev range (220 Nm or 162 lb.ft from 1,700 to 5,500 rpm, rather than 240 Nm or 177 lb.ft between 1,900 and 5,000 rpm), suiting the characteristics of the transmission.



At all times the engine was eager to perform, and for the record will propel the car to 62 mph in just 7.8 seconds. It pulled strongly from around 1,400 rpm and cruised in a refined and quiet manner at all speeds up to our legal motorway limit of 70 mph, which required an engine speed of just 2,400 rpm.

The transmission was silky-smooth in operation too, and happily changed up and down on its own when required. Equally, if desired the steering-column mounted 'paddle' shifters are there and can be engaged if the driver prefers to make changes manually. They too worked well, although for most of my time with the car I let the transmission do its own thing.

I should also mention the 'Econ' button (located on the right-hand side of the fascia), which can be pressed to optimise fuel economy and emissions, or disengaged to provide enhanced performance.



The transmission gate incorporates a 'Sport' ('S') mode too, which alters the ratio change points within the seven speed transmission, to provide a more sporty drive. On the relevant page within Honda's comprehensive 700 page handbook, it states that the 'S' setting can be used... "For better acceleration, to increase engine braking, when going up or down hills, when driving in the seven speed manual shift mode, or when towing a trailer in hilly terrain". Spot-on.

The instrumentation was a model of clarity, with the traditionally-marked speedometer and



tachometer unmistakably clear and well-illuminated at night, with the same comments applying to the temperature and fuel gauges.



I found that the satellite navigation system worked well and was intuitive.

I wasn't so keen on having a multitude of vehicle operation functions accessible only via the touch screen set-up, although the menus were fairly easy to get used to.

I did like the on-board trip computer which, as with other current Hondas, retains the fuel consumption figures obtained during earlier journeys (between re-sets of the trip meter - and there are two of these), as well as the average figure for the current trip.



Heated front and rear screens are fitted, as well as a powerful fan for the dual zone climate control system (that enables the driver and front seat passenger to set different heat outputs for each side of the vehicle). On several very cold, damp mornings during my time with the HR-V, the screens cleared very quickly indeed – a great safety boon in our UK climate I feel.

So performance-wise and in so many practical ways, the HR-V was a delight to drive and to use.

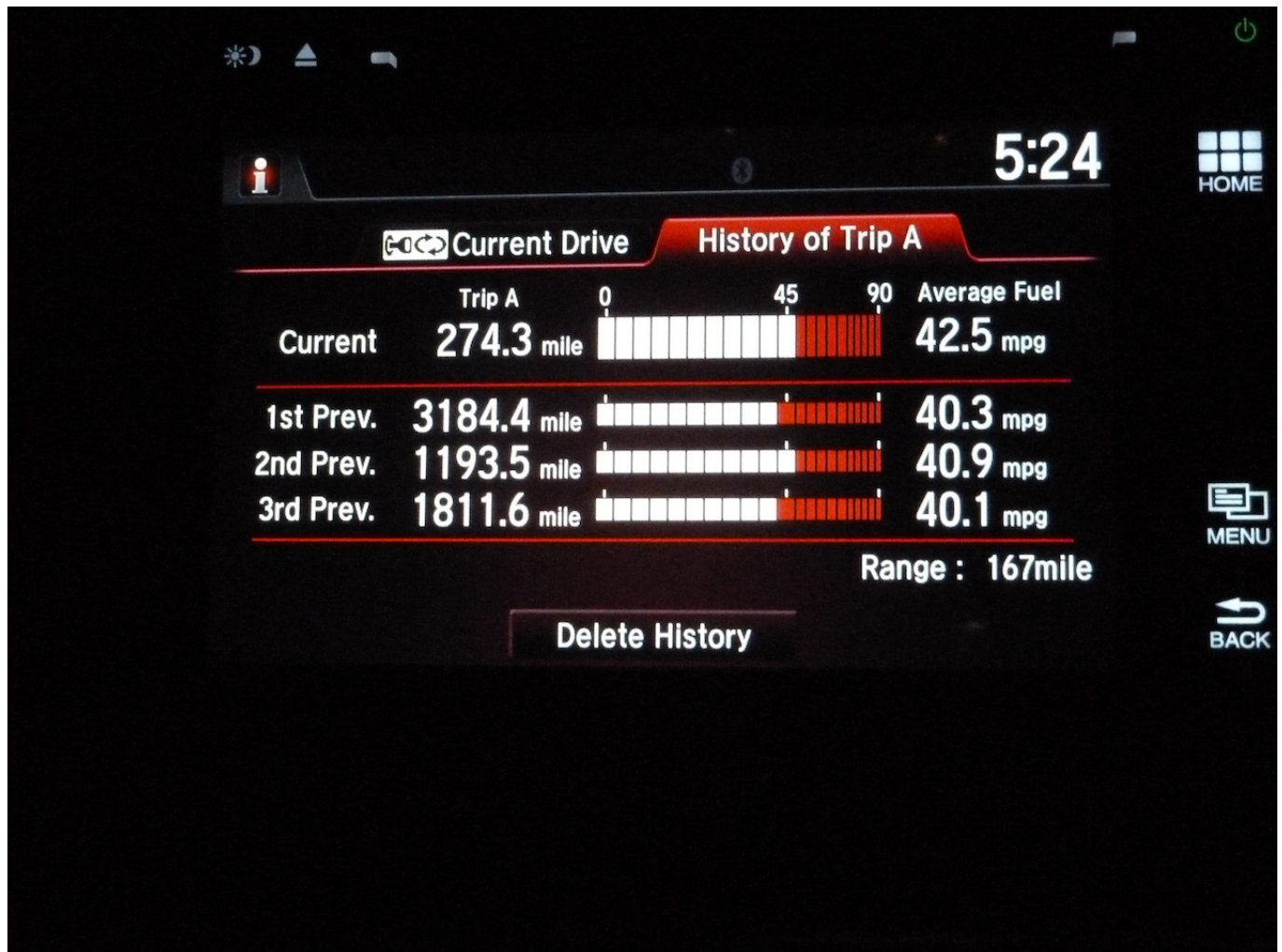
It handled well too; on fast main road curves and on slower twisting country lanes with clear visibility, it cornered easily and seemed to enjoy travelling as much as I did driving it. The Honda stuck to the chosen line with little body roll evident, and felt sure-footed. The brakes were excellent in all situations too, although I am still not keen on electrically-operated parking brakes...

Unfortunately it seemed to be raining for most of the week during which I road-tested this car, but the effective lights and screen wipers coped well and helped provide reassurance during long trips with surface water and mud a-plenty (even on main roads).

My passengers – young and older – were unanimous in praise of the Honda's ride comfort, even on our local pothole-strewn roads..

Commendable Fuel Economy

The official WLTP 'Combined' fuel consumption figure for the HR-V Sport with the CVT transmission is 39.2 miles per gallon. During my week with the car, it returned an average of 42.5 mpg in mixed driving conditions and some atrocious weather conditions. I feel that is pretty good for a reasonably large car that is powerful and sporty to drive, and has a CVT transmission. (For the record, the official 'Combined' figure for the manual gearbox version is 42.2 mpg).



According to the on-board computer, previous averages between tripmeter re-sets had worked out pretty consistently at between 40.1 and 40.9 mpg.

VERDICT

The HR-V stands out from other SUVs of similar size, not least because, with its highly effective and easy-to-use 'Magic seats' system, it is *such* a wonderfully practical car for families and/or for anyone with a busy lifestyle, and who need(s) to use one vehicle for a multitude of people/load carrying requirements. It's just a great vehicle to live with on an everyday basis.



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It is also stylish, powerful, a willing and fast performer, and capable of returning excellent fuel consumption figures, bearing in mind the car's performance potential.

I liked this Honda - a lot.



WHEELS-ALIVE TECH. SPEC IN BRIEF:



Honda HR-V 2.0 Sport (CVT).

Engine: Four cylinder, 1.5 litre (1498cc) direct injection turbocharged petrol motor.

Transmission: Automatic CVT, front wheel drive.

Power: 182 PS @ 5,500 rpm.

Max. Torque: 220 Nm (162 lb.ft) from 1,700 to 5,500 rpm.

Performance:

0-62 mph: 7.8 seconds.

Top speed: 134 mph.

Fuel consumption:

Official WLTP figure: Combined, 39.2 mpg.

Achieved during our Wheels-Alive test, over 274 miles, average 42.5 mpg.

Estimated mileage range on a full tank (50 litres or 11 Imperial gallons), at our actual achieved mpg: Approximately 465+ miles.

CO2 Emissions: 163 g/km.

Warranty: Three years/90,000 miles.

Insurance Group: 27E.

Euro NCAP rating: 5*.



Dimensions:

Length 4,346 mm (14.26 ft), Width 1,790 mm (5.87 ft), Height 1,605 mm (5.27 ft).

Luggage capacity: 431 to 1,473 litres (15.22 to 50.75 cu.ft).

Five doors, five seats.

Max. towing weight, braked trailer: 1,000 kg (2,205 lb).

Price ('On the Road'): £29,090. (Plus, on our test car, Metallic paint £525, making a total of £29,615).