Honda HR-V SUV Road Test

Published: December 2, 2015

Author: David Miles

Online version: https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/honda-hr-v-suv-road-test/



HONDA RETURNS TO THE COMPACT SUV MARKET WITH THEIR LATEST HR-

V RANGE

by David Miles (Miles Better News Agency)

Honda first put a toe in the compact SUV sector in 1999 with the original HR-V in both three and five door body styles. Recently they have re-entered this fast growing sector with the latest HR-V available with petrol and diesel engines options but only as a five door and only with front wheel drive.

In recent years Honda has been content, or it could be complacent, to operate in the SUV market with their larger CR-V range of five door, 2.0-litre petrol and 1.6-litre diesel, two and four wheel drive models. The latest change in search of all-important lower CO2 emissions was to replace their original 2.2-litre diesel unit with their new 1.6-litre unit which is now also used in the new HR-V.

The SUV sector remains the fastest growing category in the UK's new car market putting it in third place behind B-segment superminis and C-segment lower medium sized cars. The SUV segment has as well morphed into compact Crossover models where the Nissan Qashqai and Juke models are the best sellers but there are lots more newcomers and long-termers. These include the Skoda Yeti, Renault Captur and Kadjar, Suzuki Vitara, Mazda CX-3, Kia Sportage/Tucson, Hyundai Sportage, Jeep Renegade/Compass, Mini Countryman and the Mitsubishi ASX to name but a few. All or most offer 2WD and 4WD versions.

The HR-V uses a version of the Honda Jazz five door hatchback platform and looks like a raised hatchback with the scaled down coupe side profile of the larger CR-V. It has a rising waistline and a roof-line that lowers to the rear. Enhancing the coupe styling are hidden rear door handles positioned in the top rear corner exterior trim. Honda describes the design as a characterful coupe with the tough stance of an SUV with the spacious and versatile seating design of an MPV. They also say that 70% of customers for the HR-V will be conquest buyers from other brands, predominately from the MPV or C-segment hatchback sectors.

There is no doubt that there is plenty of choice of models from numerous brands in this fast growing sector and it's almost to saturation point so there are lots of finance offers available to would-be owners. Honda for instance is currently offering a £500 contribution towards the purchase of an HR-V.

The new HR-V prices start from £18,495 and go up to £26,055 after a considerable price rise of an average 4.4% from the start of December. There is the choice of a 1.5-litre,

i-VTEC 130hp non-turbo petrol engine with a six speed manual gearbox or a CVT automatic with seven simulated gears, plus the new 1.6-litre i-DTEC 120hp turbodiesel mated with a six speed manual transmission. All are front wheel drive only models. Both are four cylinder, EU 6 compliant engines part of Honda's latest low emission Earth Dreams technology series.

With the 1.5-litre petrol engine producing 155Nm of torque at 4,600rpm the high revving unit powers the HR-V from 0- 62 mph in 10.7-seconds (manual) and 11.2-seconds (CVT). Top speed is 119mph for the manual and 116mph for the CVT versions. Fuel economy can be up to 54.3mpg (combined cycle) with CO2 emissions from 120g/km – both achieved using CVT or 50.4mpg and 130g/km for the manual. The VED road tax costs are £0 First Year rate then £30 onwards for the CVT models and £0/£10 for the manual.

The 1.6 litre i-DTEC diesel engine develops 300Nm of torque from 2,000 rpm with a top speed of 119mph and can accelerate to 62 mph in 10.0-seconds. With its manual transmission fuel economy is officially 74.3mpg (combined cycle) with CO2 emissions of 104 g/km. The VED road tax charge is £0/£20. All these figures depend upon the chosen specification level.

The specification levels start at S and rise through SE, SE Nav and EX levels. All versions have the City-Brake Active System and even the lowest S version has 16-inch alloy wheels, Magic Seats, Bluetooth, climate control, cruise control, front/rear parking sensors, front/rear electric windows, idle stop/start, Econ mode and alarm. The Honda CONNECT

infotainment System with downloaded Apps and internet browsing with a 7.0-inch touchscreen is standard for the SE grade and upwards. The top EX grade additions include 17-inch alloys, dual zone air con, leather interior, smart entry and start button, panoramic opening glass sunroof, rear view camera, heated front seats, LED headlights and daytime running lights, rear privacy glass and roof rails.

I got to grips with the Honda HR-V and the top EX spec level with the new 1.6-litre 120hp turbodiesel unit. This is of all aluminium construction and derived from the previous 2.2-litre turbodiesel engine. Whereas the original HR-V was ahead of its time the new one is definitely playing catch-up in a market sector that is still growing but now somewhat oversubscribed. Certainly owning an SUV style lookalike with 2WD has become a status decision based on the purchase price or lower monthly repayment figure. Enlightened customers choose the more practical advantages of the modern on-demand fuel efficient 4×4 systems now readily available in SUVs and conventional saloons and estates.



The HR-V is mainly about packaging combining the looks of an SUV with the size of a family hatchback and the seating and load carrying combinations of an MPV. Core to the interior are those clever Honda ‘Magic Seats’ system as pioneered with the Honda Jazz The Magic Seat system allows each of the 60/40 split second-row seats to adopt numerous configurations to maximise the people and load carrying versatility of the vehicle. The Magic Seat system can adopt one of three ‘modes’ from the standard seating position. The Utility mode allows the rear seat back to fold forward as the seat base lowers into the rear passenger footwell creating a maximum 1,845mm long flat floor. In Tall mode the front of the rear seat base rise up and back and are locked in a vertical position to leave a cargo height of 1,240mm from floor to ceiling allowing tall objects to be placed behind the front seats. As for Long mode the front passenger seat back folds backwards to a horizontal position while the rear seat back folds forward forming a ‘tunnel’ to accommodate items up to 2,445mm long.

The load area bay has a capacity of 470-litres with the rear seats upright, increasing to 1,533- litres with the rear seats folded. There is a wide tailgate opening of 1,180mm and low loading height 650mm ensure that the capacious cargo space is easily accessible. The panoramic sunroof option combined with the rear lowering roof line does reduce headroom for tall rear seat passengers and being a six-footer I found the opened tailgate didn't provide quite enough headroom when loading the boot.

In the front the fascia panel layout looks smart and generally of good quality but there are numerous controls and some of them are tucked away and hidden from view. In the centre of the fascia is the 7.0-inch touchscreen which operates, amongst other things, the Connect infotainment system. The responsiveness is sluggish and required several stabs of the finger to get it to operate or to get to the correct function. On the plus side the leather upholstery and heated front seats are welcome features in the top EX spec model.



The HR-V handles more like a raised hatchback than a full-blown SUV. There is some body roll during cornering and the steering is on the light side, sometimes slow to react and not plentiful in its feedback. The ride is generally comfortable but impacts and noise from potholes are very noticeable as are the vibrations from driving over broken tarmac and cats eyes.

Another core feature of the HR-V is the choice of engine. The normally aspirated non-turbo 1.5-litre, 130hp petrol unit is frugal on fuel but sluggish I'm told by my colleagues but it has a lower price of around £1,800 depending on the spec level.

The new 1.6-litre i-DTEC turbodiesel offers a slightly lower power output of 120hp but the 300Nm of torque from 2,000rpm is double that of the petrol unit and available from much lower in the rev range hence it is far more responsive. At times, under hard acceleration overtaking slower vehicles, the diesel unit sounded noisy but that quickly disappeared once cruising speeds had been reached. At lower speeds in commuting traffic and covering winding country roads the engine was flexible and held high gears at low speeds so maximising fuel economy and that is the HR-V diesel's strong point. Whilst officially the diesel unit will return 68.9mpg in the Combined Cycle my real-life test driving covering all types of conditions returned an average of 56.7mpg and during 70mph motorway cruising it was just over 60mpg.

The new HR-V certainly isn't the cheapest to buy mid-sized compact SUV/Crossover on the market but it is near the top for the lowest real-life running costs. Add in the Magic Seat versatility and it becomes an interesting option in this crowded market sector. Being new to the market the HR-V, other than the fuel economy and seating versatility, doesn't bring much that's class-leading to this sector. Unfortunately it is playing catch-up instead of being the new benchmark model just as the original HR-V was in 1999. It is also expensive to buy.



VERDICT

For: Impressive real-life fuel economy, low tax costs, versatile seating/load combinations, well equipped modern interior design, relatively comfortable, easy to drive.

Against: All models now look expensive and in particular this top level version in a very

competitive and overcrowded market, limited rear seat headroom for adult passengers, some hidden from view buttons and control functions, noise intrusion and impacts from potholes easily transmitted into the car, noisy engine under acceleration, no spare wheel.



MILESTONES/WHEELS-ALIVE TECH. SPEC IN BRIEF

Honda HR-V 1.6 i-DTEC EX 5-door Compact SUV

Engine: 1.6-litre, 4-cylinder, turbodiesel

Transmission: 6-speed manual, 2WD.

Power: 120PS at 4,000 rpm

Torque: 221Nm of torque at 2,000rpm

Performance:

0-62mph 10.5-seconds

Top speed: 119mph

Fuel consumption: 68.9mpg Combined Cycle (56.7mpg on test).

CO2 emissions: 108g/km, VED road tax £0 First Year rate then £20 thereafter, BIK company car tax 19%.

Insurance group: 20E.

Warranty: 3-years/90,000-miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,294mm (14.1 ft), W (inc. door mirrors) 2,019mm (6.6 ft), H 1,605mm (5.3 ft), boot/load area 470 to 1,533-litres, braked towing weight 1,400kg, 5-seats/5-doors.

Price: £26,055 after a 4.4% range average price increase.