



Honda Prelude Advance – Road Test

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There is an almost ageless and timeless appeal about the Honda Prelude coupé, writes Robin Roberts (and WheelsWithinWales)...

It has always been a highly popular part of the Honda line-up and showed the Japanese engineers not only build very competent family cars but, given encouragement, can turn out a capable coupé which turns heads and delivers smiles-better-performance.



It has the classic profile or silhouette of a sporting coupé which might be drawn by a child and this familiarity probably explains the popularity we saw on test.

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Our week with the latest seventh generation Prelude and, in fact the one after a 25 years gap from its forerunner, was accompanied by other drivers' comments, photoshots and even thumbs up from passing drivers on motorways who had pulled up close behind the take a look before overtaking and a few more pictures were bagged for their satisfaction.

And satisfaction is what the new Honda Prelude Advance delivered for us.

In the Prelude, Honda has combined its acclaimed 2.0 direct injection petrol engine with a new automatic continuously variable transmission which incorporates a software engineered S+ Shift which allows a driver to simulate eight speedy manual changes and become more involved with the performance.



But it also has two electric motors to maximise economy and then performance which probably explained the high fuel economy we saw.

Being low slung with a traction battery, those motors as well as the engine and transmission, the centre of gravity is low to aid handling and roadholding and it is fitted with adaptive dampers working through the chosen drive modes of Comfort, GT, Sport or Individual. Truly something for every journey with predictable and enjoyable results.



The Prelude has the ability to drive in pure electric or hybrid mode as well as a direct mechanical drive and no less than seven settings for regenerative braking or cruising to stretch economy as far as possible.

All the major controls were well placed and the adjustable steering had a lot of feel with minimum effort, a good turning circle and no vibration or kickback while the footbrake exhibited a lot of power with a gradual build up through the pedal. The slip-off electronic parking brake did a good job under a firm application when coming to rest.

Secondary controls for the bright headlights did however need a light touch when using the indicators as they would stay on or prematurely go off.

Washers were incorporated into the front wipers and cleared a big sweep of the screen.

Vision to the front was very good, to the sides not so clear due to the low seating and high waistline and over the shoulder sightlines were poor but at least it had an excellent reversing camera to compensate for the small back window.

Prelude is fitted with 10.2-inch compact instruments panel ahead of the driver with clear, changeable dials and display as well as a nine-inch fascia-centered touchscreen for the infotainment and smartphone links.

Separate controls below this display operate the air conditioning temp, fan and direction with four vents to fill the cabin, which is preferable to an integrated touch system.

Oddments spaces were reasonable on the centre console, the glovebox, door bins and seat pockets.

It comes with a bespoke Bose sound system and comprehensive radio, mobile integrated sound selection and inductive phone charging.

It is a 2+2 design with very small twin rear seats and little legroom behind but their backs



drop flat to maximise carrying capacity in the boot. There's no firm luggage cover, rather a very clever pop-up screen to hide contents from prying eyes.

This lack of a rigid barrier to the load area did however allow a lot of road rumbles to resonate into the cabin and add to that from the front wheels as well as the engine. Wind noise was low, thankfully.

The overall interior impression was of a well designed and carefully co-ordinated cabin with duo toned seat upholstery and fascia detailing, subtle instrumentation and a distinctly sporty character.



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Underfoot, even in Comfort mode it was respectable and then became sharper and more



engaging as different modes were picked.

The active chassis control endowed the Prelude with safe, surefooted, responsive handling, particularly through twisting curves, while it slowed and stopped without incident.

The multi-link suspension did a very good job of providing a smooth ride or sporty experience, but all delivered without stress or drama.

We were surprised by the overall fuel economy of just over 55 mpg and it never went below 50 mpg thanks to that intelligent software in the powertrain.

VERDICT

To us, this is a very modern sports coupé which manages to look traditional but is at the cutting edge of environmental and engineering ability while being totally enjoyable and affordable for many potential owners.

For: Styling, equipment, performance, handling, comfort, economy.

Against: Road noises intrude, some fascia rattle, small back seats and tight legroom.

FAST FACTS

Model: Honda Prelude Advance

Price: £43,340

Mechanical: 327 ps 4 cyl 2.0 petrol/electric eCVT

Max Speed: 117 mph



0 - 62 mph: 8.2 secs

Combined MPG: 55 mpg

Insurance Group: 33

C02 emissions: 117 g/km

Bik rating: 29%, £455FY, £640SRx5

Warranty: 8 years/ 100K with servicing

Size: L 4.54 m (14.90 ft), W 2,08 m (6.82 ft), H 1.35 m (4.43 ft)

Bootspace: 264 to 760 litres (9.32 to 26.84 cu.ft)

Kerbweight: 1,480 kg (3,263 lb lb)