

Honda ZR-V Sport – Road Test

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The new petrol electric hybrid Honda ZR-V SUV given another outing with Sport specification by Robin Roberts (and Miles Better News Agency).

Honda has joined the modern space race with their new mid-sized range of petrol/electric mid-sized SUV range launched a couple of weeks ago.

It has tested the waters before but this time it's launched a serious strike for the sector that is steadily capturing more sales than ever and currently takes almost 60% of UK registrations.



The new Honda ZR-V is probably its strongest competitor against brands that have been reaping the rewards of the MPV and SUV market for a few years.

Starting with the well-equipped Elegance grade from £39,494, this features 18-inch grey alloy wheels, front and rear parking sensors, 11 airbags, a rear-view camera, and an eight-speaker audio system. A nine-inch touchscreen display is available across the range, complete with Honda Connect, navigation, and Apple CarPlay / Android Auto compatibility, alongside a seven-inch digital instrument display behind the leather steering wheel.

Sport grades begin at £41,095 with a unique front bumper and honeycomb grille treatment, gloss black mirrors and window trim, matte black wheels, and a fabric and synthetic leather combination interior trim. Sports pedals, ambient LED lighting, hands-free power tailgate, wireless charging, and additional USB ports are also standard.

Range-topping Advance models from £42,895 feature full leather seats with perforated inserts and silver stitching, a heated leather steering wheel and heated front and rear seats, panoramic sunroof, and gloss black and diamond cut alloys.

Customers opting for the flagship ZR-V also get a 12-speaker BOSE sound system, a 10.2-inch multi-information display, and an all-new six-inch head-up display. They are all built in China to Honda's exacting quality standards.

This means only the Elegance grade model escapes the list price premium road tax from years two to five and the Sport and Advance models attract a £560 duty each year after first registration.

It is an important model for Honda as costs and motoring expenses rise and the competition is tough so it hopes to not only migrate existing owners to the newcomer but also have an offering which will pull in new customers to the brand, even if it has to build attractive finance packages.

Honda anticipates the best selling version will be the top model, but I'm not so sure, and the



Elegance is very keenly priced while the Sport as tested here is a noticeable step up but begins at £1,700 less than the top version, although the mid-range model just slips over the higher tax band level.

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Sharing a common petrol/electric hybrid powertrain throughout and based on the proven system under the Civic there is no issue with that, giving good acceleration and effortless cruising combined with excellent economy.



You can stretch that by moving from the default Normal mode to Eco or if you've a mind to



go into Sport and you lose just a few mpg. The ZR-V is only front wheel drive and for poor weather you have a Snow mode as well to limit wheelspin.

We frequently switched between Eco, Normal and Sport modes on the console behind the Drive button, a convenient and simple arrangement, and immediately felt the difference when accelerating and overtaking and you can also utilise column paddles to have the best responses.

The engine is quiet at all but the highest revolutions, the changes very smooth and quick whether going up or down and it also cuts out to save fuel when stationary but instantly restarts as the throttle is depressed. This really helps to push up the economy as we found the overall figure to be very good.

The refinement of the powertrain is matched by that of the steering, being accurate but light and did not suffer from vibrations or kickbacks, while the brakes were also extremely smooth yet powerful, quickly slowing the car from high speed with utter control and without drama.

Secondary switches grouped on and around the wheel and column were easy to use and had a reassuringly positive action, with additional buttons on the lower fascia and central console.

The ZR-V has a really good air conditioning and climate control system for the cabin, driver and windows, matching rotary knobs with push buttons to achieve any desired settings.

The system kept the windows clear on chilly mornings and matched to big glass area, bright lights and an effective wash and wipe system front and back, you had really good visibility, which was just as well because of the thick c-pillars and high tail created blindspots which then required the sensors to pick up anything hidden from sight.

I liked the bright wide-ranging and intelligent self-dipping headlights on dark roads.



The driver's essential instruments were simple and clear, backed up by a rolling range of additional information between the two main displays. The nine-inch infotainment display was fairly clear but unusually slow working with the Honda Connect for mobile phones.

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Oddments room was very good for a family car with large glovebox, door bins, central box and trays as well as pockets on the rear of the front seats, plus small door bins, and there were plenty of places to plug in accessories throughout. A powered tailgate is standard along with offset split seat backs for versatile loading.

The tailgate, rear and front doors all opened wide to ease access and loading and once inside the occupants have comfortable, nicely trimmed seats with reasonable adjustment range but not a height setting for the front passenger, which is unfortunate.

The front pair of seat were well shaped and supporting but the rear bench was flatter and might be a squeeze for three abreast. Headroom was good and better than the top Advance with its standard sunroof, while legroom was generous.

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The fit and finish inside was really tight and attractive, with mood lighting for nights, and the refinement was evident with low mechanical noise levels, almost no wind noise and just some road rumbles to intrude.

Handling was good for an SUV, so maintaining Honda's reputation for sportiness with safety and it generally soaked up bumps but occasionally jarred over some potholes and ridges. By nature it would run wide on some bends but lifting off throttle or winding back the steering brought it back on course without any drama.



VERDICT

The careful matching of equipment to pricing, combined with that excellent powertrain and dynamic qualities, mean the Honda ZR-V is fit for liftoff.

For: Excellent build quality, reasonably well equipped, roomy, fair performance.

Against: Road rumbles noticeable, one powertrain and only front wheel drive, with a few blindspots to vision, high-ish tax costs.



FAST FACTS



Model: Honda ZR-V Sport SUV

Price: £41,745, inc. metallic paint

Mechanical: 143 PS 4 cyl 2.0 petrol & 184 PS electric motor, CVT front wheel drive

Max Speed: 108 mph

0 - 62 mph: 7.9 sec

Combined MPG: 48

Insurance Group: 35

C02 emissions: 131 g/km

Tax costs: Bik rating 31%, VED £245FY, £560SRx5 years

Warranty: 3 years/ 90,000 miles

Size: L 4.57 m (14.99 ft), W 1.90 m (6.23 ft), H 1.62 m (5.31 ft)

Bootpace: 380 to 1,322 litres (13.42 to 46.69 cu.ft)

Kerbweight: 1,604 kg (3,536 lb)