Latest Honda Jazz – Road Test

Published: August 30, 2018

Author: David Miles

Online version: https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/latest-honda-jazz-road-test/

The 2018 Honda Jazz 1.5 i-VTEC Sport Navi

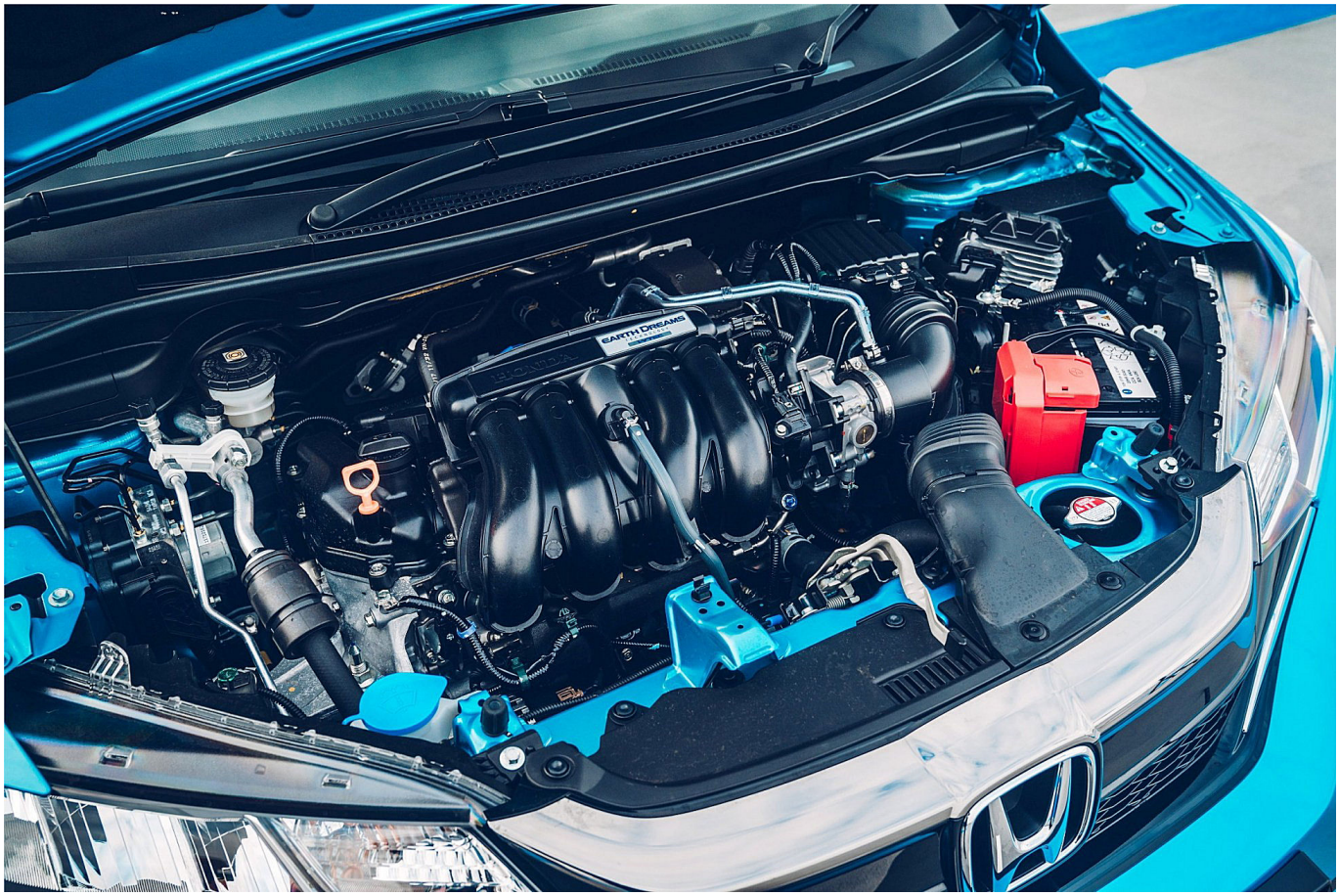
Honda’s new Jazz – Might hit the right notes for some.

Tried and tested by David Miles (Miles Better News Agency).

The Honda Jazz supermini sized B-segment five door hatchback is one of Honda's best selling model range in the UK. But this third generation range is no longer built in this country as production for global markets at their Swindon plant has been given over to the latest Civic C-segment hatchbacks. Over seven million Jazz units have been sold globally since the first generation model was introduced in 2001

This generation Jazz is built in Japan but in core ways it 'mirrors' the previous model in terms of its interior packaging, which has made it a very popular and practical model. It has in the past proved very popular with drivers of a more senior age who liked the styling, space, easy access, good visibility, frugal running costs and Honda's reputation for reliability. In the UK around 60% of Jazz sales go to retail customers and the remainder to corporate/fleet users. Around 70% of UK customers choose a manual transmission over the CVT automatic option.

With no diesel or hybrid power unit available, engine choices on offer are a 1.3 litre i-VTEC variable valve timing 102 hp normally aspirated petrol unit with manual or CVT auto gearbox options, with S, SE and EX specification levels. The second engine choice is the 1.5 litre i-VTEC variable valve timing, 130 hp unit. Both engines are four cylinder units and neither is turbocharged. This new 1.5 addition to the latest Jazz range comes only with Sport specification and is aimed at attracting younger, or older young-at-heart, customers.



2018 model year prices, after a recent increase, now start off at £14,240 for the 1.3 S model, £15,620 for the 1.3 SE and £17,240for the 1.3 EX. Prices for the new 1.5 Sport are £17,330 or £17,890 for the Sport Navi spec levels. Choosing the CVT auto gearbox will add £1,060 to all those prices.

Specifications are reasonable across the range with base-grade S models fitted as standard with convenience features such as air conditioning, cruise control with speed limiter and dusk sensing auto lights plus City-Brake Active. The mid-grade SE model adds front and rear parking sensors, electrically adjustable and heated door mirrors and 15-inch alloy wheels. Those opting for the top-grade EX model will appreciate smart entry and start, automatic climate control and reversing camera. Styling is enhanced with 16-inch alloy wheels and front fog lamps, while LED headlights are now standard addition on the EX.

The 2018 Jazz exterior design offers a bolder and sportier appearance with the sharp styling lines and sculptured panels and wedge shaped side profile taken from the latest Civic hatchback. The new Jazz Sport 1.5 takes this new sportier design further. It is based on the SE grade and features a thinner front splitter beneath the lower grille and triple-strake diffuser under the rear bumper. Both are finished with a sporty red accent line similar to the Civic Type R, LED headlights, front fog lamps, side sill skirts, a tailgate spoiler and gloss-black 16-inch alloy wheels.

The Sport interior features a pinstripe pattern on the upholstery and a leather-wrapped steering wheel and gear knob, all of which are enhanced by orange stitching. Pity this Sport

spec doesn't include the useful reversing camera found with the EX model but it does have Forward Collision Warning, Intelligent speed Limiter, Lane Departure Warning and Traffic Sign Recognition support systems.

Core to all Jazz models – the interior packaging of versatile and roomy space – remains one of its main selling points. Unlike the new Civic, the updated Jazz retains the 'signature' Honda Magic Seats system. The 60-40-split folding rear seats offer surprisingly good rear legroom thanks to the relatively long wheelbase of 2,530 mm (8.30 ft). The rear seats easily fold to provide very useable load/passenger carrying combinations in a vehicle just a shade under four metres (about 13 feet) long for 1.3 litre versions and just over four metres for the Sport versions with their larger front sports style bumper. With all the seats in use there is 354 litres (12.50 cu.ft) of boot space, fold down the rear seats and this goes up to 897 litres (31.68 cu.ft) but if loaded to the roof there is 1,314 litres (46.40 cu.ft) of cargo room. A wide vertical tailgate gives good access to the load area although the load floor is significantly below the top of the rear sill so items have to be lifted up and over the sill and into the load area. Although the load floor is flat it is still difficult to push heavier items fully into the load area to maximise its space. Another issue was the somewhat flimsy load floor over what would be the spare wheel cavity. This area of the floor felt thin and I'm not sure how durable it will be after long-term use. No spare wheel is provided either so it's a dreaded inflation kit instead.

This slideshow requires JavaScript.

The interior quality throughout looks and feels a step lower than previous UK built models. The plastics are shiny, hard and scratchy in places and it looks more of a quality suited to Asian markets than what we used to with European or South Korean models. Insulation from engine and road noise was also a quality and refinement issue for me, especially with the 1.5 litre high revving engine. The Honda Connect infotainment system with its seven-inch touchscreen was sufficient but lacked the sophistication and prompt responses compared to many other competitor models – it was a bit 'old-school'.

The 1.5-litre four cylinder i-VTEC variable valve timing unit produces 130 hp at 6,600 rpm and 155 Nm (114 lb.ft) of torque at 4,600 rpm. Compared to modern-day turbocharged petrol units both the hp and Nm figures are modest outputs, certainly not in keeping with the Sport title given to this latest Jazz range addition. Top speed is an adequate, but modest, 118 mph for both manual and auto versions and the zero to 62 mph acceleration time for the manual gearbox version is 8.7 seconds – and an even longer 10.1 seconds for the CVT automatic option.

The six-speed manual gearbox offers slick and precise changes with the first four gears being close ratio settings with fifth and six gears more overdrive ratios. Cruising at 70 mph in sixth gear only uses around 3,100 rpm, showing its long legged-ness but the thrashy engine noise percolating into the cabin sounded as though it was working much harder than it actually was. Several times it just sounded and felt as though a seventh ratio would have been beneficial to reduce the noise intrusion. There was also considerable noise transmitted into the cabin from the tyres over coarser road surfaces, hence my comments that better insulation material for European markets is needed. Generally the ride comfort was good with only the worst of the potholes being felt inside the car, and overall the handling was well-balanced, although not as good as the latest Ford Fiesta. The Jazz Sport was easy to drive with really good visibility although a reversing camera would have added to its functionality over and above the front and rear parking sensors.

Despite the liberal use of engine rpm the fuel economy was very acceptable, with a real-life figure of 45.1 mpg overall during my week long test driving covering all types of journeys from urban commutes to longer motorway cruising. It was a bit less than the official Combined Cycle figure of 47.9 mpg but then again due to the hot weather I had the air-con working most of the time. With CO2 emissions of 133 g/km for the manual gearbox test model, the VED First Year road tax cost £205 and then £140 Standard rate for year two onwards. Company car users will pay 27% Benefit-in-Kind tax and insurance is Group 19A, six groups higher than the 1.3 litre models.

VERDICT

Overall the latest Honda Jazz in its new 1.5 litre Sport Navi manual model guise I tried and tested faces stiff competition in its sector. It has to compete against the likes of the latest generation roomy five door hatchbacks such as the VW Polo, SEAT Ibiza and the best-selling new Ford Fiesta, plus the latest compact SUV styled models such as the Renault Captur, Peugeot 2008 and Citroen C3 Aircross. Whilst Honda's Jazz used to call the tune in its class, today with more competition it could be out of tune, more Blues than Jazz.

For: Smart new Sports specification exterior styling, roomy well-designed versatile interior space, acceptable real-life fuel economy, generally well-equipped.

Against: Engine too noisy and lacks the responsiveness of modern turbocharged petrol engines, Sport name only applies to its looks, needs more interior sound insulation, flimsy boot floor, faces stiff completion from new generation hatchbacks and compact SUVs.

Milestones and Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

2018 Honda Jazz 1.5 i-VTEC Sport Navi manual.

Price: £17,890.

Engine/transmission: 1.5 litre, four cylinder, variable valve timing petrol, 130 hp at 6,600 rpm and 155 Nm (114 lb.ft) of torque at 4,600 rpm, six speed manual.

Performance: 118 mph, 0–62 mph 8.7 seconds.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 47.9 mpg (45.1 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 133 g/km, VED First Year road tax £205 then £140 Standard rate, BiK company car tax 27%.

Insurance Group: 19A.

Warranty: Three years/90,000 miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,051 mm (13.29 ft), W 1,694 mm (5.56 ft), H 1,550 mm (5.09 ft), wheelbase 2,530 mm (8.30 ft), boot/load space 354 to 1,314 litres (12.50 to 46.40 cu.ft) , five doors/five seats.