Latest Jeep Renegade PHEV – First Impressions

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New Jeep Renegade 4xe news and first drive views...

By Robin Roberts (and Motor Writer News Agency).

Jeep has turned a corner with its new PHEV plug-in hybrid electric Renegade.

Without compromising its famous off-road abilities the Renegade 4xe adds emission lowering and power enhancing electric drive and it’s the first electrified Jeep to be sold in Britain.

It uses the familiar Fiat-Chrysler Group's 1.3 litre four-cylinder petrol engine with an electric motor or generator driving the front wheels coupled with a hefty 60 hp electric motor on the back axle using power from a 114 kWh 400v traction battery under the back seats.

In pure electric mode you might select in toll-charging zones or on daily commutes it will cover 26 miles, enough for most trips, but you have the range anxiety removed by the petrol engine and on a first drive this week it returned 46.7 mpg over mixed dual carriageway, main and B-class roads along the Welsh marches.

The Jeep Renegade 4xe will be sold in three trim levels with two power outputs. The entry Longitude costs from £32,600, the mid-range Limited begins at £34,500 and the £36,500 Trailhawk completes the line-up.

Depending on the chosen power output the 1.3 petrol engines develops 130 hp or 180 hp plus the electric motor's 60 hp in either case which translates into a 0 – 62mph time of 7.5 seconds and a maximum 81 mph in full electric mode and up to 124 mph in hybrid with both units working. They have a six-speed automatic/manual transmission only.

As the latest model in the Jeep range, Renegade 4xe has the most advanced driver assistance systems including LED headlights, collision and lane departure warning, intelligent speed assist and traffic sign recognition along with parking sensors, while drowse detection is offered for the first time in a Jeep.

Additional things like blind spot detection, reversing camera and automatic park assist are among options.



Jeep product manager Paul Rush said it is a very significant model for the brand, “It’s our first PHEV model and in a few years we will have plug-in versions of every model so we can face the new adventures of a low carbon age without compromising on Jeep’s famous off-road abilities. It’s more efficient, more capable, more comfortable and more fun.”

Mr Rush said the Renegade 4xe weighs about 110 kgs (243 lbs)more than the standard Renegade 4×4, can tow a 1,150 kg (2,535 lb) braked trailer and it’s been carefully specified with features which would cost about £2,000 more than in its nearest rival.

He sees the market for the newcomer coming from drivers who do not want a large MPV or 4×4 but instead prefer a more agile car for school runs or congested urban streets, but who also want all-wheel-drive for wintery roads or leisure use.

“Early adopters will be interested in the hybrid technology and zero emissions, who possibly work mostly from home and only occasionally go into towns and cities.”

He said that Jeep hoped to sell about 600 Renegade 4xe models this year and 1,600 in a full year in what is now designated the I Zero sector and is one of the predicted boom categories over the next few years with registrations tripling. For peace of mind the newcomer is available with a five year/100,000 miles warranty when bought through FCA Finance.

Jeep expect the Limited version will take about 60% of registrations and fleet or business drivers will be just under a third of users thanks to its 12% BiK tax levy.

First impressions



It is an extremely good combination of petrol and electric power with near seamless progression from the initial EV power at start-up to petrol use and the driver can select three modes to stretch the performance or lower emissions.

You can also decide on the traction modes with the Selec Terrain buttons so you’re rarely going to be stuck anywhere the ground clearance will let you go. It all works very simply and very well.


Jeep
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The feature which stood out for me was the exceptionally smooth ride over any surface, its responsiveness and grip on damp surfaces and positive steering and brakes.

The secondary buttons can be a bit daunting until you become familiar with their positioning and functions but there was no complaining about the essential instruments or the 8.4-inch infotainment screen,

Seats were good for most, adjustment should be suitable for all but the tallest users, and the boot was easy to load or empty. It would be good for four people but a squeeze for five, although headroom was good throughout. Families might find it short of oddments' space.

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A comprehensive heating and ventilation system was easy to understand and operate; there were powered windows and good wipers but no opportunity to test the lights. I was a bit disappointed that for the best seller Limited price of £34,500 to find no reversing camera as standard on what is likely to be a popular model for shopping and school runs.

VERDICT

It was brisk, gripped well and coped with rough surfaces while handling with a safe and surefooted character. The car's agility was excellent in tight spaces and it was roomy for four but I think possibly a tight fit for five.

For: Compliant ride, performance, handling, advanced technologies and driver assistance systems.

Against: Limited pure electric range, back seat's shoulder room, small boot, no standard fit reversing camera.



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

Jeep Renegade 4xe Limited £34,500.

Mechanical: Four cylinder, 190 hp 1.3 hybrid petrol and electric motors, six speed auto, 4×4.

Performance: 124 mph, 0 – 62 mph 7.5 seconds, 46.7 mpg on test, CO2 49 g/km.

Tax costs: BiK company car tax 12%, VED First Year rate £0, Standard rate £140.

Insurance Group: TBA.

Warranty: Five years/100,000 miles.

Sizes: L 4.24 m (13.91 ft), W 1.81 m (5.94 ft), H 1.70 m (5.58 ft).

Boot space: 330 litres (11.65 cu.ft), braked towing weight 1,150 kg (2,535 lb).

Kerb weight: 1,770 kg (3,902 lb).