Latest Toyota C-HR 1.8 Hybrid – Road Test

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The 2018 Toyota C-HR Compact SUV 1.8 Hybrid…

…Tried and tested by David Miller Wills Better News Agency

The Toyota C-HR (Coupé-High Rider) is a compact five door SUV with 1.2T petrol or 1.8 petrol electric hybrid powertrains, the latter underpins the latest Prius hybrid, and the C-HR uses the same new Global Architecture platform as the Prius as well.

Unlike the blandly styled Prius the C-HR is a very different looking animal with edgy sharp styling lines, sculptured panels, coupé style roofline and with a steeply raked forward rear tailgate and neat roof spoiler.



The latest on-the-road prices, introduced from April to take into account the increases in VED road tax, range from £21,600 for the 1.2 litre turbo petrol 115 hp models up to £28,620 for the top specification 1.8 hybrid petrol 122 hp version. Most are front wheel drive although the 1.2 unit is available with four wheel drive for an extra £1,285. The 1.2 engine has manual and CVT auto gearbox options whilst the 1.8 hybrid petrol is CVT automatic only.

In the UK 75% of C-HR sales are for the hybrid petrol version and last year Toyota sold a combined total of 14,677 units equally split between retail and business/fleet buyers. The business user in particular is attracted by the low CO2 figures of the hybrid petrol versions of 86 or 87 g/km, depending on the wheel size. This low figure means Benefit-in-Kind

company car tax is an attractive 19% from April this year; it was 18% before.

When it comes to the new rate of VED road tax, also applicable from April this year, the hybrid petrol model with its alternative fuel discounts costs £95 for the First Year rate and then £130 Standard rate for year two onwards. The official Combined Cycle fuel economy figure for the hybrid petrol models range from 72.4 to 74.3 mpg, depending on wheel size

By comparison the 1.2 turbo petrol models have CO2 figures starting from 134 g/km for two wheel drive models and 144 g/km for four wheel drive versions so VED First Year rate is £205 for both choices and then £140 Standard rate and BiK tax is 27 and 29% respectively. When it comes to fuel consumption the official Combined Cycle figures for this engine ranges from 37.2 mpg for the 4WD CVT auto models up to a best of 47.9 mpg for the 2WD manual with 17-inch wheels.

Both engines are available with all spec levels which are Icon, Excel, Red Edition and Dynamic, giving the 2018 range 13 different variants plus numerous options and nine Packs to personalise the vehicle to the user's own choice.

My 2018 model year test drive version was the C-HR Dynamic Hybrid 1.8 CVT priced at £28,620. But added to that cost was the £545 metallic paint option of Metal Stream (grey) with a black roof and the £1,595 Premium Pack which consisted of full black leather upholstery, JBL premium sound system and nine speakers giving a very pricey total of £30,760.

The SUV segment, stretching from compact to medium to large, is awash with new and long standing models which are so popular they account for between one out of every three or one out of every four new cars sold in Europe and the UK new car markets; it's difficult in many cases to tell them apart. However the Toyota C-HR is different in terms of its youthful radical sporty and athletic styling proposition.

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The interior design is just as radical as well, continuing the distinctive fashion conscious theme with a good level of specification for even the Icon version. All models have Toyota's Safety Sense system which includes Pre-Collision alert, pedestrian protection, adaptive cruise control, lane departure alert, automatic high beam headlights and road sign assist. All versions have a centrally positioned Toyota Touch 2 eight-inch touchscreen with sat-nav added for Excel versions and above. Bluetooth connectivity is standard for all levels as are DAB radio, a rear view camera, electric front and rear windows, auto lights and wipers, air-con, electric parking brake, EV, ECO and Power drive modes for the hybrid models, tyre pressure warning, hill start assist, traction control and a full set of front, side and curtain airbags plus 60/40 split folding rear seat backs. The top spec Dynamic model's kit includes purple cloth upholstery, unless the optional leather pack is chosen, heated front seats, LED front fog lights, LED headlights with automatic levelling, LED rear lights, Bi-tone black paint for the roof, 18-inch alloy wheels and electrically heated, adjustable and folding door mirrors.

This generation 1.8 litre, four cylinder petrol engine with its twin motor electric hybrid system has improvements throughout, ranging from the thermal efficiency of the engine, improved gas flow combustion, improved cooling and exhaust gas recirculation, and a revised heat recovery system that uses spent exhaust gases to speed up the warming of the engine's coolant. Work has also been done to reduce energy losses through friction of components within the engine.



The transaxle is lighter weight, housing two electric motors, one primarily serving as a generator and starter motor, the other is the electric drive motor and also a generator which captures energy during the regenerative braking mode. It drives the car from start-up, at low speeds and EV mode and is the sole propulsion method when reversing. The nickel-metal battery is 10% smaller but holds the same amount of power as previous versions, but can absorb energy faster by 28%. To keep the vehicle’s centre of gravity low

for optimum handling performance the battery pack is located beneath the rear seats and this also means no space is taken up in the 377 litre (13.31 cu.ft) boot. Drive to the front wheels is through a CVT continuously variable auto transmission.

The 1.8 petrol unit produces 97 hp but with the electric motors the total system output is 122 hp with 142 Nm (105 lb.ft) of torque from the engine and 163 Nm (120 lb.ft) from the electric motor. Top speed is a modest 105 mph and the zero to 62mph acceleration time is an even more modest 11.0 seconds. But on the brighter side the official Combined Cycle fuel consumption figure is 72.4 mpg for the Dynamic model with the larger 18-inch wheels and CO2 emissions are a very desirable low 87 g/km so it's much less taxing in terms of running costs.

In real-life driving conditions hybrids are notoriously less impressive for fuel economy. My week of driving returned an overall 51.2 mpg, not very close to the official figure. On local roads, travelling into town or on country lanes where there were greater opportunities for the hybrid system to recharge itself, the figure was 55.4 mpg and the C-HR felt far more accomplished, refined and nicer to drive. However a 160 mile journey, mainly of 70 mph cruising on motorways, the figure dropped to 48.7 mpg and the vehicle felt out of its comfort zone. Going up hills took its toll on maintaining cruising speeds and thanks to the power sapping CVT auto transmission the brisk acceleration needed to join fast moving traffic was tardy and the engine became very noisy. Its sweet-spot performance, refinement and quiet noise levels were to be found in urban and rural driving conditions, probably where most of us do most of our driving. In faster moving traffic conditions it has its limitations but unlike pure electric powered vehicles there are no driving range mileage limitations and it's cheap for tax costs.

VERDICT

The handling was sure-footed, the ride comfort was good despite having the larger 18-inch wheels, so overall in the right place, and right driving conditions the latest Toyota C-HR could be the right vehicle. An added bonus is it that it also looks considerably more distinctive and desirable than many of its samey competitors.

For: Distinctive edgy sports exterior styling, good quality eye catching interior design, high spec levels, excellent safety equipment, very low taxes and potentially low running costs, compliant ride comfort, sure-footed handling.

Against: Noisy, harsh and sluggish acceleration performance on fast traffic roads, real-life fuel economy fell well short of the official figure, claustrophobic rear seating, restricted rear quarter visibility.



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

2018 Toyota C-HR Dynamic Hybrid 1.8 five door compact SUV.

Price: £28,620 (£30,760 as tested).

Powertrain: 1.8 litre normally aspirated 97 hp, 142 Nm (105 lb.ft) petrol engine plus two electric motors giving a total output of 122 hp, CVT auto gearbox, front wheel drive. Performance: 105 mph, 0–62 mph 11.0 seconds.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 72.4 mpg (51.2 mpg overall on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 87g/km, VED First Year road tax £95, Standard rate £130, BiK company car tax 19%.

Insurance Group: 14E.

Warranty: Five years/100,000 miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,360 mm (14.30 ft), W 1,795 mm (5.89 ft), H 1,565 mm (5.13 ft), boot space 377 litres (13.31 cu.ft).