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Toyota bZ4X all-electric SUV – Road Test

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Toyota fans now have a completely electric model added to the range as the industry slowly but relentlessly rolls towards the end of hybrid and internal combustion engines.

Robin Roberts (and WheelsWithinWales) reports...

After dabbling with an electric version of their RAV4 off-roader in the late 90s and pushing ahead

with hybrids and stablemate Lexus electric models, it's now the time for the Toyota bZ4X; code for

beyond-Zero, size-4 and X-suv.

It makes sense, sort of, but a definitive name might have been a better marketing move nevertheless.

However, we have to go with what we are given and assess how it stands up to more established

and straightforward named rivals, including an all-wheel-drive badge-engineered version sold as the

Subaru Solterra which is nearly identical as it was developed alongside the Toyota bZ4X.

The maker's first BEV to be built on their latest variable e-TNGA platform will be followed by smaller

and larger stablemates in the years ahead.

There are five models currently, priced from just about £43,000 to over £51,500, in Pure, Motion



and Vision trim levels.. They share a common 71.4 kWh battery and motor producing 201 or 218 hp

depending on the choice of front or all wheel drive automatic transmission, and a buyer must simply

decide if they want slightly more range or greater all-weather practicality before signing on the

bottom line.

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Toyota was among the first manufacturers to embrace electric vehicles and has benefitted from the

experience which has allowed it to guarantee the Lithium-ion battery retains at least 70 per cent of

its capacity up to 10 years or 100,000 miles, subject to an annual Toyota EV health check.

The powertrain is a straightforward start, select and set off system which you can refine to give

more regeneration or adjust for economy, normal or snow conditions with selectable traction control

as well. We played around with these and managed to get a range close to 300 miles, but of course

individual driving styles will be reflected in the eventual range.



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As you'd expect, the acceleration with the motor is brisk and near silent with a noticeably powerful

deceleration in the stronger mode which turns it into a single-pedal drive if desired.

Using the assisted pedal, the braking was particularly strong and even with it disengaged the

retardation produced fairly good feedback. With the autohold in use the car was effortless in traffic or

on slopes.

Steering felt a little lifeless but the turning circle was good and it did not suffer from kick-backs or

vibration, but some may find the steering wheel on the small side as well, although this did help

with access.

Secondary controls for lights and wipers were close to the spokes but some may bemoan the

absence of a rear wiper in slow moving winter traffic. The front pair did a good job clearing the glass and

the headlights were strong and beams wide.

Toyota has packed a lot of tech and switches into the spokes, fascia and console and while well

marked the buttons were on the small side for our liking, not too easy to see or operate at



night either.

They have done a reasonable job with the dials in front of the driver and the central infotainment

screen with a lot packed into the displays and selection moved quickly and clearly.

The cabin temperature controls were straightforward and our test car came with a sort of booster

system for the feet while the A/C was effective throughout and kept the screens clear, or you could

use any of the four powered door windows as well.

We were surprised by the absence of a glovebox and the slender styling of the front door bins which

meant any odd items had to live in the back door bins, the central cubby or small trays on the

console. Not what we expected in a family car.

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Moving to the back of the car, the luggage area was fairly good even before dropping the offset split

seatbacks and you have a useful underfloor recess for the charging cables but little else.

Getting in or out was easy with good leg and headroom throughout but shoulder width was tight in



the back for anyone over average size.

The Toyota's seats were very comfortable; nicely padded, well shaped and supporting for all but the

tallest users with long thighs. The adjustment range on the front pair was good for average sized

occupants.

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It rode well over all surfaces although you could hear the suspension working away and tyres

bumping over potholes or raised tarmac as the absence of engine and transmission noises meant

other sources intruded.

With the battery pack located low within the wheelbase the roadholding was very good and the

handling felt surefooted with no apparent vices.

The multitude of advanced safety features in the bZ4X from parking to more dynamic and cruising

features should keep a driver out of trouble and contribute to a relaxed trip irrespective of traffic

conditions and combined with the brisk charging, which is possible, there should be little



concern

over range anxiety.

VERDICT

In conclusion, the Toyota bZ4X does a reasonable job so long as you pick the best drivetrain and

trim level for your bank loan or personal contract but it's unlikely to set your heart racing.

For: Very comfortable, good instruments, lively, reasonable range, refined powertrain, well made.

Against: Lot of road and suspension noises, modest oddments and luggage room, tight for five people.



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Fast facts:

Toyota bZ4X Pure

Price: £42,995

Mechanical:



0 - 62 mph: 7.5 sec

Maximum: 100 mph

201 hp electric motor, 71.4 kWh battery, 2WD

Range: 295 miles

Insurance: 35E

Emissions: Zero

Bik: 3%, £10FY, £620SRx5

Warranty: 3 years/ 60,000 mechanical & battery 10 years/ 100,000 miles

Size: L 4.69 m (15.39 ft), W 1.86 m (6.10 ft), H 1.6 m (5.25 ft)

Bootspace: 452 litres (15.96 cu.ft)

Kerbweight: 1,970 kg (4,343 lb)