Toyota Camry – Road Test

Published: October 25, 2021

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Online version: https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/toyota-camry-road-test-2/



The Toyota Camry Excel Saloon revisited by Robin Roberts (and Miles Better News Agency).

After 15 years out of the UK market, the new generation Toyota Camry is turning heads with its striking saloon shape.



While hatchbacks and SUVs have come to dominate registrations and estate cars are few and far between, the once highly popular larger saloon can still stand out as a alternative offering.

But beauty is more than skin-deep in the Camry as it uses the Toyota New Global Architecture, closely blending styling with engineering and I think it’s a real challenger to the best that European rivals can put up against it.

The advanced petrol-electric self-charging hybrid powertrain is exceptionally good and range-anxiety-free, the handling is surefooted thanks to front struts and rear wishbone design and it rides very comfortably.



Then there is the matter of the extremely good warranty which is better than most rivals giving extended peace of mind.

Last spring saw the Camry updated both inside and out. A new front bumper added street presence, with a chrome frame contrasting around black horizontal bars and at the rear, the light clusters were changed.

Both Camry Design and Excel grades have new alloy wheel designs: 10-spoke silver 17-inch wheels for the Design model and a multi-spoke design with a machined finish for the Excel's 18-inch rims. Inside, there's new leather upholstery and the power-adjustable front seats in the Excel model got ventilation and memory functions in addition to the heating and lumbar support standard across the range. Apple CarPlay or Android Auto has been made standard

and it works quickly and well.





Safety improvements include the addition of Lane Trace Assist to the Toyota Safety Sense package and improved function for the tyre pressure monitoring system.

New features exclusive to the Camry Excel include a 360-degree view of the area immediately around the car when manoeuvring in confined places; a useful automatic tilt action on the door mirrors when reversing; and paddle shifts mounted on the steering wheel. The power-adjusting steering wheel itself now comes with a heater and a memory setting.

The Excel also gains a larger, nine-inch display for the Toyota Touch multimedia system while the seven-inch screen is retained for Design grade.

The established Camry specification includes dual-zone automatic air conditioning, front and rear parking sensors, LED headlights (low beam only for Design), daytime running lights and front fog lights and satellite navigation. Excel grade features include rear privacy glass, wireless charger, smart entry, Rear Cross Traffic Alert and Blind Spot Monitor.

There is about a £2,200 price difference between the two grades and our model was the upper version at just over £34,800.

The Camry can trace its origins to 1982 when it was launched as a saloon in Japan but since then has also been sold in hatchback and estate versions. Today's eighth generation wide-bodied saloon replaced the Avensis in the Toyota UK line-up. Its global sales have also seen Daihatsu and Holden badged versions and confusingly it's also been sold as a Lexus in some foreign markets.

Our test of the Camry began with a long motorway journey over eight hours and despite traffic and time it proved an extremely comfortable trip, and surprisingly economical as well.

The car's a good size for two adults with plenty of room throughout and a good sized boot. However it has a low aperture to access, although the seats and centre armrest all drop down almost flat to boost useful carrying length and total capacity. I can see it becoming a favourite with the demanding taxi and hire fleets thanks to its bulletproof build quality and practicality for such roles.





The hybrid powertrain really is extremely smooth and sensitive, giving the best for any conditions and the addition of paddle levers and a sporty side to the lever on the console adds some spice to the subtlety. You also have buttons behind the gearlever to select eco, normal or sporting responses and third to engage EV as a priority.


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Power delivery is very good, particularly mid-range once it gets going, with velvet smooth changes up or down and matched to easy flowing steering and very feelsome brakes underfoot.

Not only does it steer and stop with confidence but its roadholding is surefooted over any surface and it is very comfortable inside.

The road rumbles and suspension bump-thump are there but occupants are very well insulated and the superb shaping of the seats' cushions and backrests really locate and look after the driver and passengers. Access is good and room inside generous.

Oddments room is reasonable with glovebox, console bin and recesses as well as seatback pockets, but the shallow door bins would not take larger items.

Controls for the driver were well laid out if packed on the wheel's spokes and column, with a few fascia buttons better spaced and the clearly set heating and ventilation settings below the eight-inch central infotainment screen.

The regular driving gauges were large, clearly marked and easy to read at night and were separated by the multi-mode display for features selected by the driver.

The h&v system was highly effective and backed up with the new warm/ chill buttons for the front seats and heated steering wheel, features you would not normally expect at this price.

Visibility was excellent all round with a low waistline, big windows, effective front wipers/ wash and bright long range lights and clear cameras for reversing and kerbside viewing.

On the move the Toyota Camry rode very well, cornered with confidence, was surprisingly agile and had a respectable acceleration but its memorable feature was the excellent economy it returned overall. We did two long motorway trips in varying traffic conditions and the electric power really helped cut down on the petrol used and it's one of the few cars tested that actually attained the claimed the 51mpg WLTP figures for fuel consumption.

VERDICT

If you are in the market for a distinctive looking car which is refined and sophisticated, economical and comfortable and you don’t need to carry big loads, the Toyota Camry is a very good choice with its reputation for longevity and low ownership costs.

For: Very comfortable, good seats and roomy, excellent controls, surefooted handling, smooth powertrain, highly economical.

Against: Average performance, small boot opening, some road noise and limited oddments spaces.



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

Toyota Camry Excel 4-door saloon

Price: £34,830

Mechanical: 4-cylinder, 215 hp, 2.5 litre petrol hybrid, 6-speed automatic

Max Speed: 112 mph

0 – 62 mph: 8.3 seconds

Combined MPG: 51

Insurance Group: 32

CO2 emissions: 125 g/km

Tax costs: BiK company car tax rating 29%, VED First Year £170, VED Standard rate £145

Warranty: 5 years/100,000 miles

Size: L 4.89 m (16.04 ft), W 1.84 m (6.04 ft), H 1.45 m (4.76 ft)

Bootspace: 524 litres (18.50 cu.ft)

Kerbweight: 1,635 kg (3,605 lb)