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Toyota Corolla 2.0 Hybrid Touring Sports – Road Test

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NEW BRITISH BUILT TOYOTA COROLLA 2.0 HYBRID TOURING SPORTS

By David Miles (Miles Better News Agency)

In March this year the Corolla name returned to the Toyota line-up of passenger cars 14 years after the Auris name replaced it. Like the Auris range it replaced, the 12th generation five-door Corolla Hatchback and Touring Sports estate petrol and hybrid models are being built in the UK at Toyota's Burnaston factory in Derbyshire for European markets. In addition there is a new Corolla Saloon added to the line up in hybrid form and this model is built in Turkey. Toyota Manufacturing UK at Deeside North Wales produces the petrol engines for the hybrid models.



The new Corolla range of the three body styles comprises of 31 different models with prices starting from £21,305 and going up to £30,345. All models are covered by Toyota's 5-year/100,000-mile warranty

Five door hatchback versions are slightly more popular than the Touring Sports estates with the new Saloon expected to be the minority selling version. Around 90% of UK customers are expected to choose a self-charging petrol-electric hybrid powertrain.

News just in from Toyota shows they have reached 300,000 UK sales of self-charging hybrid models since the first Prius hybrid went on sale 19 years ago. If we include Lexus hybrid UK sales the sales figure is 400,000 units and together the two brands account for 50% of the UK's alternative fuel vehicle new car sales. The Toyota hybrid range extends from the Yaris supermini through to the RAV4 SUV. This year hybrid models of the new Corolla Hatchbacks, Touring Sports, Saloon, RAV4 and Camry Saloon have been added to their line up plus the UX compact SUV and ES mid-sized saloon to the Lexus range. This gives the two brands a total of nine hybrid ranges. Further figures just released by Toyota GB show a 76% increase in new hybrid model sales in the past two years and a 10% increase for the first six months of this year over the same period in 2018.

The new Corolla model range



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The new Corolla family of models all use the Toyota New Global Architecture (TNGA) GA-C platform already used for the Toyota C-HR SUV and latest Prius models. Toyota says by using the latest technology platform brings multiple benefits including improved driving dynamics thanks to a lower centre of gravity, a balanced chassis and a more rigid body plus the requirement to fit the driving support safety technologies. It also allows for sportier styling over the previous bland Corolla and Auris offerings in the highly competitive C-segment. Principal competitors are the Ford Focus, Volkswagen Golf, Vauxhall Astra and Skoda Octavia but there are many more.

The March 2019 debut of the Corolla range marked the introduction of Toyota's new dual



hybrid powertrain strategy. The Hatchback and Touring Sports were the first models to offer UK customers a choice of two self-charging petrol-electric hybrid powertrains; an improved 1.8 litre with 122 hp and a new 2.0 litre system developing 180 hp, both with CVT auto transmissions. The Saloon is only available with the 1.8-litre hybrid powertrain. Reflecting Toyota's focus on self-charging hybrid technology there is just one conventional engine option available for the Hatchback and Touring Sports variants, a 116 hp 1.2 litre Turbo petrol unit with a 6-speed manual gearbox. No diesel engine is available for any model. The all-important CO2 emissions are; 1.2T petrol 128 to 132 g/km depending on model and spec, the 1.8 hybrid 76 to 83g/km and the 2.0 hybrid 89g/km.

Depending on the body style, the equipment grade structure available is Icon, Icon Tech, Design and Excel. Icon and Icon Tech models are available with the 1.8-litre self-charging hybrid system and 1.2T petrol engine, while Design versions offer the 1.2T petrol and both the two new hybrid systems. The Excel grade is all-hybrid offered with both the 1.8 and 2.0 litre systems. The Saloon is only offered with the 1.8 hybrid power source and with all spec grades except the top level Excel.

Across the complete range all models are equipped with the enhanced functions of the second generation of Toyota Safety Sense. The upgraded package includes a Pre-Collision System that can now detect pedestrians in the vehicle's path during both day and night-time driving, and cyclists during daylight hours. The Adaptive Cruise Control has improved deceleration and acceleration control, keeping the Corolla a safe distance from the vehicle ahead. The ACC also has a new low-speed function for driving in stop-start traffic, bringing the car to a halt when the vehicle in front stops. Other systems include Lane Trace Assist, Road Sign Assist and Automatic High beam.

So with a return to the Corolla name, new platform, new technologies and petrol-electric self charging hybrid options plus a vehicle with greater kerb appeal thanks to the improved dynamic styling and Toyota's legendary reliability what will customers get for their money?



At the media launch last February In Majorca ahead of its UK sales debut in March, I concentrated on what is likely to be the best selling version, the Corolla Icon Tech Hatchback 1.8 Hybrid CVT auto priced at £24,805.

Back in the UK for a longer test I have just finished a week's motoring behind the wheel of the Corolla Excel 2.0 Hybrid CVT auto Touring Sports estate which carries the range topping price of £30,345. So not only do you get more power you get more spec and a



higher performance with only slightly more CO2 emissions and a bit less real-life fuel economy but in reality it will all be about the purchase price or more likely PCP finance costs. Around 50% of Corolla UK sales will go to retail customers, the rest to business users, choosers and fleet operations.

At this point it's worth outlining the spec levels throughout the range. The starting point Icon models are equipped as standard with features including 16-inch alloy wheels, automatic LED headlights, eCall connectivity, heated front seats, Toyota Touch 2 with eight-inch multimedia touchscreen, reversing camera, DAB radio, 4.2-inch colour TFT multi-information display, dual-zone air conditioning. The Icon Tech grade adds further useful technology including Toyota Touch with Go with satellite navigation and voice control, 7-inch colour TFT multi-information display, parking sensors and Intelligent Park Assist with Intelligent Clearance Sonar on the 1.8 hybrid models.

Moving up the grades the Design level majors on added style and convenience items including 17-inch alloy wheels, rain-sensing wipers, power adjustable heated door mirrors with automatic folding function, rear privacy glass, LED front fog lights and optional opening panoramic roof. The flagship Excel grade adds 18-inch alloy wheels for the Hatchback models but Touring Sports versions retain 17-inch ones, Bi-LED headlights, Smart Entry, sports front seats, part-leather seat upholstery and optional opening panoramic roof. There is also an optional £450 eight-speaker JBL premium sound system but only for the 2.0 litre hybrid models.

In terms of exterior styling the Hatchback looks fairly sporty but it is noticeable how much shorter it is at 4,370 mm (14.34 ft) compared to the Touring Sports estate at 4,650 mm (15.26 ft) and Saloon at 4,630 mm (15.19 ft) which have more grown-up elegance about them. The hatchback has a wheelbase length of 2,640 mm (8.66 ft) but the estate and saloons have significantly more rear seat legroom as the wheelbase length is 2,700 mm (8.86 ft).

For all three body styles there is a significant improvement over the previous Auris models



with better functionality, ergonomics and quality with ample soft-touch trim surfaces with good driving support technology right through the four grade levels. But the user-friendliness of the sat-nav and infotainment system lags behind other brands in this sector.

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The hatchback's rear passenger seat legroom I thought was on the skimpy side and I much preferred the extra rear legroom provided by the longer wheelbase estate and saloon models although the headroom in the rear of all three versions is not plentiful. Back in the UK nothing has changed my mind and the Touring Sports estate does benefit customers by having better rear seat legroom and of course more boot space with 581 litres (20.52 cu.ft) rather than the 361 litres (12.75 cu.ft) of the hatchback. With its standard 17-inch wheels and longer wheelbase the ride compliancy and comfort is also excellent and less choppy than that of the hatchback.

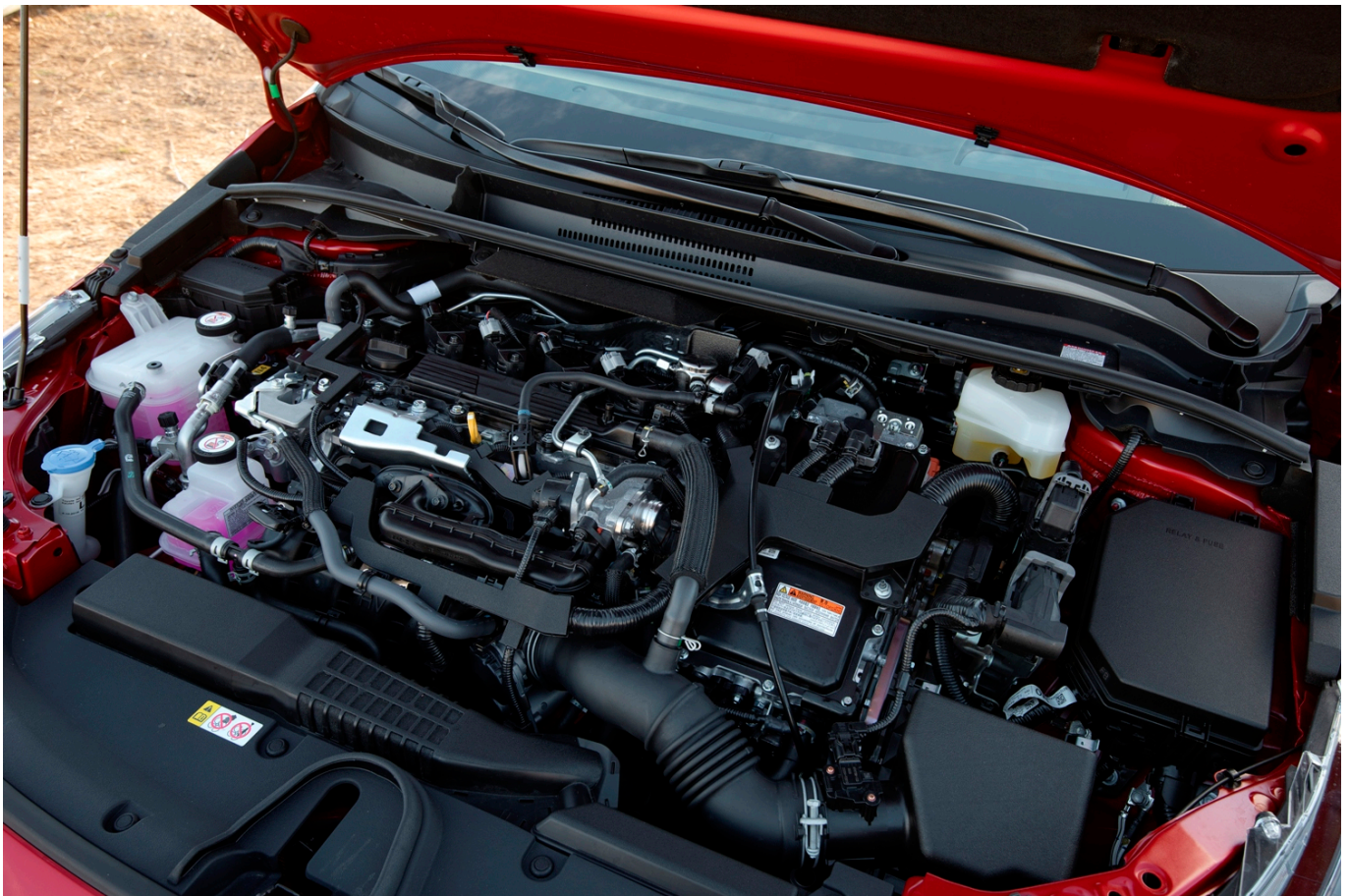


My conclusion from the initial Majorcan test driving was that the main selling and revised 1.8 litre Hybrid unit with its CVT transmission with the Hatchback model will be perfectly acceptable for most drivers given the amount of traffic congestion we suffer in the UK. The hybrid unit works well with the CVT transmission but it is still fairly vocal during brisk acceleration. That is a known and now accepted 'characteristic'. Under lighter load, driving in traffic the engine/electric motor combination is ideal for today's driving conditions and fuel efficient and that was proved by a 59 mpg figure during the media driving event.

Back in the UK behind the wheel of the larger and heavier but more comfortable Touring Sports estate I found the new 2.0 litre self-charging Hybrid power unit with a total power



output of 180 hp mated with a CVT automatic gearbox with six artificial gearchange steps, felt more like a conventional sports turbocharged petrol engine with a conventional automatic gearbox. It matched the engine revs, speed and pressure on the accelerator really well but there was still the usual higher engine tone during brisk acceleration. It was noticeably sharper in delivering its extra power and high mileage motorway cruiser-users will gain more benefit from this new 2.0 litre hybrid powertrain. Top speed is 112 mph and the zero to 62 mph acceleration time is 8.1 seconds.



The Toyota self-charging hybrid system allows the vehicle to run on power from the engine and electric motor and electric power only as often as possible. On a light throttle the electric motor will cut in and the engine turn off and this is indicated with a green EV icon light. The EV mode can also be selected to run the car on electric power only under certain circumstances but this mode only offers around 2-3 miles before the engine seamlessly



switches back on again. The system also harvests more electric current for the battery through regenerative braking.

VERDICT

It all worked simply and my real-life UK test drive fuel economy for the 2.0 Hybrid Touring Sports estate was 48.5 mpg as opposed to the official 50.43 to 60.62 new WLTP Combined Cycle figures. The CO2 figure is 89 g/km so VED road tax First Year rate is £100 and the Standard rate for following years is £135. Company car drivers will pay 22% Benefit-in-Kind tax and insurance is Group 21E. Whether is worth paying £1,725 more for the 2.0 litre 180 hp Hybrid estate than the 1.8 litre 122 hp model is down to driving performance requirements, but I'd happily pay the £1,270 extra price for the Touring Sports estate over the Hatchback just for the extra room, better ride quality and greater upmarket kerb appeal.

For: British built, smart styling with good kerb appeal, improved interior quality over the previous Auris models, comfortable ride, well balanced handling, low running costs, good real-life fuel economy, better rear seat legroom than the hatchback models.

Against: Tall passengers might find the headroom restricted, fiddly to operate and generally poor sat-nav and infotainment system.



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

Toyota Corolla Excel 2.0 Hybrid Touring Sports estate.

Price: £30,345.

Powertrain: 2.0 litre, four cylinder variable valve timing DOHC petrol engine with electric motor, total self charging hybrid system power output 180 hp and 202 Nm (149 lb.ft) of torque, six speed CVT auto gearbox.



Performance: 112 mph, 0-62 mph 8.1 seconds.

Fuel consumption: WLTP Combined Cycle 50.43 to 60.62 mpg (48.5 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 89 g/km, VED Alternative Fuel First Year road tax £100 then £135 Standard rate, BiK company car tax 22%.

Insurance Group: 21E.

Warranty: Five years/100,000 miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,650 mm (15.26 ft), W 1,790 mm (5.87 ft), H 1,435 mm (4.71 ft), wheelbase 2,700 mm (8.86 ft), boot space 581 litres (20.52 cu.ft), five doors/five seats.