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Brand new Toyota Corolla – First Impressions

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GOODBYE TOYOTA AURIS - HELLO AGAIN TOYOTA COROLLA.

David Miles (Miles Better News Agency) explains and drives the new line-up...

14 years after the Toyota Auris name replaced the Corolla we see the return of the World's best-selling car brand name - Corolla - and it's on sale in the UK from the new registration plate change month of March. The range is priced from £21,300 up to £30,340 with 21 derivatives on offer. The lowest price Hybrid model is priced at £23,750. The past generation Corollas achieved over 46 million global sales since they were launched in 1966.

Like the Auris range it replaces, 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. They all use the Toyota New Global Architecture (TNGA) GA-C platform already used for the Toyota C-HR SUV and latest Prius models. Toyota Manufacturing UK at Deeside North Wales produces the 1.8-litre petrol engine for the hybrid models.

The all-new Corolla range marks the debut of Toyota's new dual hybrid powertrain strategy. The Hatchback and Touring Sports are the first models to offer UK customers a choice of two self-charging petrol-electric hybrid powertrains; an improved 1.8 litre with 120 bhp and a new 2.0 litre system developing 178 bhp, both with CVT auto transmissions. The Saloon is available with hybrid power for the first time, adopting 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 112 bhp 1.2 litre Turbo petrol unit with a six speed manual gearbox. No diesel engine is available for any model.

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.

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 new 2.0 litre hybrid system. 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?

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 and 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 eight-speaker JBL premium sound system but only for the 2.0 litre hybrid models.

At the European media launch held in Majorca last week, Paul Van de Burgh, President and Managing Director Toyota GB said in the UK they have sold a total of 101,479 Auris models during its lifetime with 13,394 units in the last full year of sales. No forecasts are possible for new Corolla UK sales due to market uncertainties and the fallout from Brexit. He did say they expect to retain a 50-50 sales split between retail and business/fleet customers. With 90% of retail customers using a PCP finance scheme for their purchases the Corolla 42-month monthly rates range from £210 to £244.

He added that 60% of UK Corolla customers will choose the Hatchback models, 35% the Touring Sports estates and 5% the Saloon. He said, "We did well with the larger Avensis



Saloon which is now discontinued and customers could see the Corolla Saloon as a possible replacement hence the reason we have added it to the line-up". Overall he expects 90% of UK customers to choose a hybrid powertrain with the 1.8 Hybrid being the most popular choice. All Hybrid's have an EV mode and he said that up to a half of typical commuting journeys can be undertaken in all-electric mode.

When it comes to the choice of specifications, Icon will appeal to 5% of customers, Icon Tech 45%, Design 20% and Excel 30%. This means the single best selling version will be the 1.8 Hybrid Icon Tech Hatchback, priced at £24,800 with a 42-month PCP cost of £219 per month.

He continued, "With the growth of the Alternatively Fuelled Vehicle market sector which now accounts for 6% of the UK's new car market with around 146,000 sales last year, Toyota Hybrids take 40% of the sector, Lexus 9% and others 51%. With this growth now is the time to offer our extended range of 1.8 and 2.0 Hybrid models".

He concluded by explaining the reasoning, after years of marketing the Auris range in the UK, for the name change; why go back to Corolla? "With so much new about the new models in terms of its architecture, technology, styling, more model variants and expanded hybrid powertrains, it made sense for us to revert to the long-established Corolla branding. Our dealers are delighted, the equity of the name is very strong and the reaction to the name change from customers has been very positive. It's a name people associate with Toyota qualities".

As for size, both the Hatchback and Touring Sports offer five doors and five seats, the Saloon four doors and five seats. The Hatchback is 4,370 mm (14.34 ft) long with a wheelbase of 2,640 mm (8.66 ft), the Touring Sports estate is 4,650 mm (15.26 ft) in length with a longer wheelbase of 2,700 mm (8.86 ft) and the Saloon 4,630 mm (15.19 ft) long with the same longer wheelbase as the estate... Boot space is 313 litres (11.05 cu.ft) for the 2.0 Hybrid Hatchback, 361 litres (12.75 cu.ft) for the 1.2T petrol and 1.8 Hybrid Hatchbacks, 581 litres (20.52 cu.ft) for the 2.0 Hybrid estate and 598 litres (21.12 cu.ft) for the petrol



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and 1.8 Hybrid estate models.





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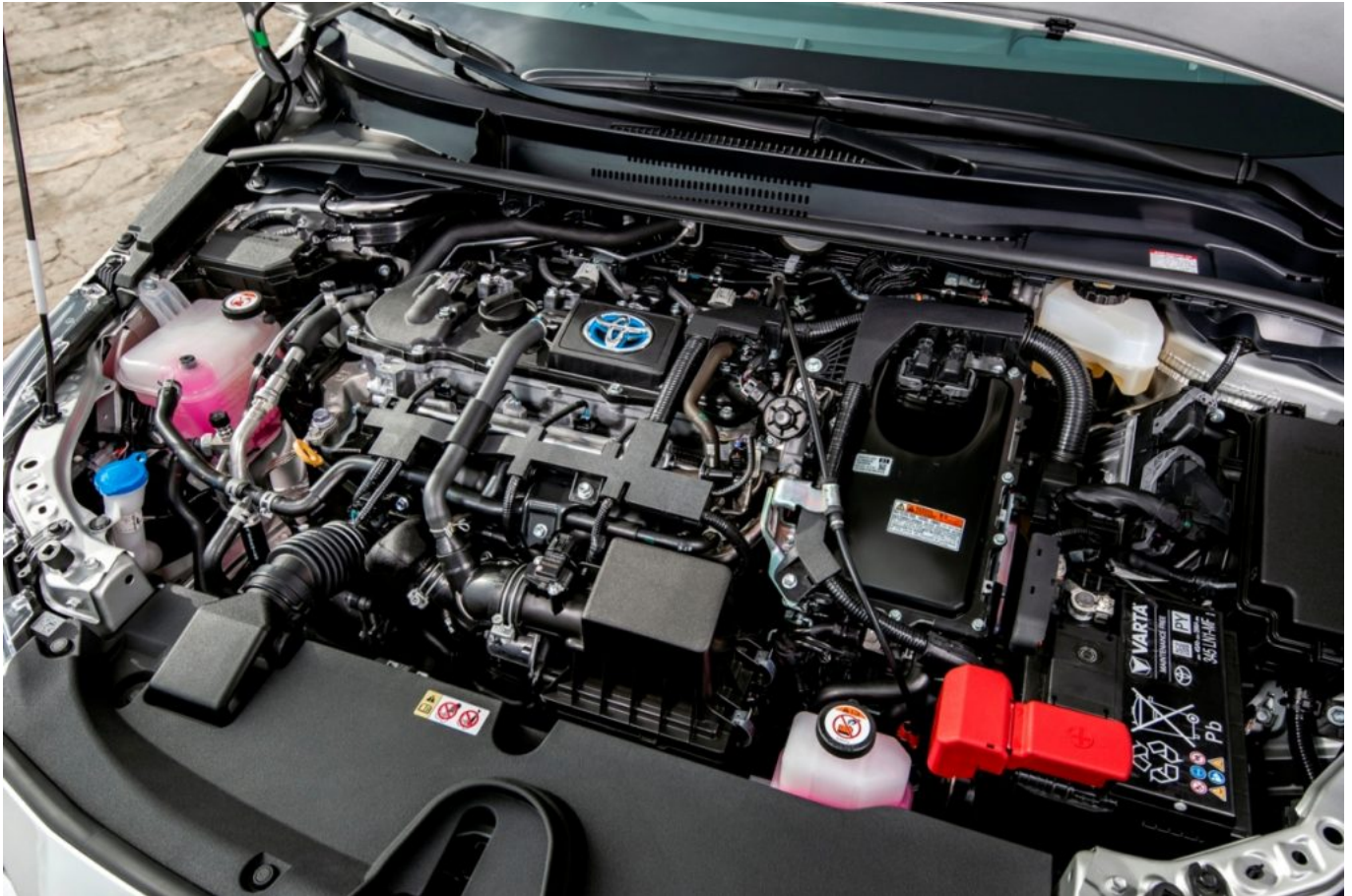
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As for power outputs, fuel economy, CO2 emission figures and performance; briefly the new 1.2T petrol unit has 114 bhp, 185 Nm (136 lb.ft) of torque, Combined WLTP fuel consumption depending on model and wheel size of 39.4 to 47.24 mpg with CO2 from 128 g/km. The zero to 62 mph acceleration time is 9.3 seconds for the hatchback and 9.6 seconds for the estate, and the top speed for both is 124 and 121 mph respectively. The VED



tax costs are £165 then £140 and Benefit-in-Kind tax at 24%.

The revised 1.8 litre self-charging hybrid system develops 120 bhp, 142 Nm (105 lb.ft) of engine torque plus 163 Nm (120 lb.ft) of electric motor torque. The Combined WLTP figures are 55.4 to 65.9 mpg depending on the body style and wheel size. The CO2 emissions are from 76 g/km. Top speed is 112 mph with zero to 62 mph ranging between 10.9 and 11.1 seconds depending on the model. The VED tax costs are £95 First Year then £130 and BiK at 19%.



The all-new 2.0 litre hybrid system develops 178 bhp and 190 Nm (140 lb.ft) engine torque with the larger 80 kW electric motor adding 202 Nm (149 lb.ft) of torque from zero rpm. Top speed is 112 mph with zero to 62 mph taking 7.9 seconds for the hatchback and 8.1 for the estate. The Combined WLTP figures range from 50.4 to 60.6 mpg, again depending on



model and spec, but all versions are shown with 89 g/km CO2 emissions so VED and BiK tax costs are the same as the 1.8 litre models. All models are covered by Toyota's five year/100,000 mile warranty.

With so much new about the revised Corolla and with its much more appealing and sharper styling inside and out, plus updated power sources with improved fuel economy and performance, it's probably justifiable giving the new range a new name other than another Auris generation. But going back to Corolla as a name might seem for some loyal customers a backwards step. Time will tell.



Touring Sports estate...



Hatchback...

Overall my brief test driving opportunity last week was at the European media launch held in Majorca which provided a good selection of modern roads, plus the usual testing mountain road driving conditions. All the models tried gave good feedback through the front wheels, the handling was sharp and all three body types felt well-balanced. Most surprising and pleasing was the excellent ride comfort even when the larger wheels were fitted.



The hatchback's rear passenger seat legroom we thought was on the skimpy side and we 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.

In terms of exterior styling the hatchback looks the most sporty with good kerb appeal, but it is noticeable how much shorter the hatchback appears than the estate or saloon which seem to have a bit more elegance about them. Inside for all three body styles there is a significant improvement over the outgoing Auris models. There is better functionality, ergonomics and quality, with ample soft-touch trim surfaces and with ample 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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For our Majorcan test driving schedule there were no 1.2T turbo petrol powered models available, reflecting its likely low demand. The main selling and revised 1.8 litre Hybrid unit with its CVT transmission 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 is fuel-efficient.

Given the new 2.0 litre Hybrid unit is only available in higher spec levels I wouldn't pay £2,750 more in Hatchback form than the 1.8 Hybrid model; with the best-selling Icon Tech version we tested costing £24,800. The fuel economy during our test driving for this best selling hatchback version was 59 mpg. We also drove this 1.8 Hybrid unit in the new Saloon which for the Icon Tech spec level costs the same as the Hatchback. Our test drive fuel consumption for this Saloon was 53 mpg.

The new 2.0 litre self-charging Hybrid power unit 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. There was still the usual higher engine tone during brisk acceleration. It was noticeably sharper in delivering its extra power but given its higher cost only high mileage motorway cruisers will gain much benefit from this new hybrid powertrain. We tested this new unit in the Touring Sports estate which costs from £28,820. Our real-life test drive fuel economy was 48.4 mpg driven over a similar route as the 1.8 Hybrid hatchback/saloon models.

VERDICT

With the choice of three powertrains, four spec levels and three body styles you might think there is a new Corolla to suit most pockets. But it faces stiff competition, not only from the latest C-segment hatchbacks and estates, but more likely from the mid-sized SUVs which continue to be the current cars of choice for many new car buyers. The new Corolla is good but is it good enough to meet that SUV challenge? More UK customers buying hybrids should help its cause.

For: British built, smart sportier exterior styling than the Auris it replaces, higher interior quality, comfortable and compliant ride, well balance handling, low tax costs, good real-life fuel economy.

Against: Hatchback versions suffer from less rear seat legroom than the Touring Sports estate and Saloon, poor infotainment and sat-nav functionality, time will tell if the name-change back to Corolla will appeal to some long-term Auris owners.



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

Toyota Corolla Icon Tech Hatchback 1.8 Hybrid CVT, (Expected best selling model).

Price: £24,800.

Powertrain: 1.8 litre, four cylinder DOHC 120 bhp petrol engine, 142 Nm (105 lb.ft) of



torque with 163 Nm (120 lb.ft) electric motor, self-charging hybrid with CVT transmission. Performance: 112 mph, 0-62mph 10.9 seconds.

Fuel consumption: WLTP Combined Cycle up to 65.9 mpg (59 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 76 g/km, First Year VED £95, Standard rate £130, BiK company car tax 19%.

Insurance Group: tbc.

Warranty: Five years/100,000 miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,370 mm (14.34 ft), W 1,790 mm (5.87 ft), H 1,435 mm (4.71 ft), wheelbase 2,640 mm (8.66 ft), boot space 361 litres (12.75 cu.ft), five doors/five seats.