



Honda ZR-V – First Impressions

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The Honda ZR-V hybrid SUV range First Drive by Robin Roberts (and Miles Better News Agency).

Honda's tightened its hold on the SUV sector with this month's announcement of the ZR-V, squarely aimed at families and retail buyers.



The Japanese car-maker has a very loyal following and while it wishes existing owners will consider the newcomer when they want to change, it also hopes to hook in buyers from other brands as the sector now accounts for almost six-in ten new cars registered.

For the Honda ZR-V, the emphasis is on proven powertrain technology, very high equipment levels, sporty handling and good economy.

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Although Honda's clever magic seats used in the Civic hatchbacks have disappeared in the newcomer, it does provide a lot of room for five with a family-sized boot, many practical details and on the Advance flagship model a lot of creature comforts.

Starting with the well-equipped Elegance grade from £39,494, this features 18-inch grey alloy wheels, front and rear parking sensors, 11 airbags, a rear-view camera, and an eight-speaker audio system. A nine-inch touchscreen display is available across the range, complete with Honda Connect, navigation, and Apple CarPlay / Android Auto compatibility, alongside a seven-inch digital instrument display behind the leather steering wheel.

Sport grades begin at £41,095 with a unique front bumper and grille treatment, gloss black mirrors and window trim, matte black wheels, and a fabric and synthetic leather combination interior trim. Sports pedals, ambient LED lighting, hands-free power tailgate, wireless charging, and additional USB ports are also standard.

Range-topping Advance models from £42,895 feature full leather seats with perforated inserts and silver stitching, a heated leather steering wheel and heated front and rear seats, panoramic sunroof, and gloss black and diamond cut alloys.

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Customers opting for this flagship ZR-V also get a 12-speaker BOSE sound system, a 10.2-inch multi-information display, and an all-new six-inch head-up display.



This means only the Elegance grade model escapes the list price 5-years premium Standard Rate road tax from year two onwards so the Sport and Advance models attract the annual £560 duty each year for that period.

Andrew Winfield, product and business planning manager, said the hybrid ZR-V fills the gap between the B sector HR-V and the D sector CR-V as part of Honda's \$64 Billion electrification programme by 2030 which will see 30 new ev models, both cars and motorbikes.

"The SUV sector now accounts for nearly 57% of UK market sales, some 13 of the top 20 models, so the arrival of the ZR-V this month is timely and important to the brand. It has been pitched against the Nissan Qashqai, Kia Sportage and Hyundai Tuscon in particular in terms of size comparisons," he said.

The 2.0-litre petrol plus electric motor hybrid powertrain with CVT auto transmission and front wheel drive comes straight out of the electrified Civic with slight modification and is common to the Elegance, Sport and Advance grades which individually differ in front grilles and bumpers, wheel finishes, interior equipment and details. There is no plug-in hybrid PHEV option. They are all built in China.



Order books are now open, demonstrations begin in July and first deliveries will be in September. Key to its success in the current economic climate is making acquiring the ZR-V affordable, particularly for families and there may be some room for price negotiation in dealerships.

On a UK media first drive this week, the Honda ZR-V impressed with its effortless performance, long legged range over 53 mpg, abundance of room and the very high equipment on our flagship model.

The boot is a useful size and quickly expands as the seats fold, the Advance full-length sunroof restricts headroom to some extent but the leg and shoulder space is good.



Ride quality was slightly firm on 18-inch wheels and tyres and you could hear the rumbles beneath them, but the powertrain was extremely quiet by contrast.

Handling was very good for an SUV of this size and the roadholding was safe and surefooted.





VERDICT

Competent newcomer in the self-charging hybrid SUV market.

For: Refinement, room, comfort, build quality, equipment and fuel economy.

Against: Only one powertrain choice, no PHEV plug-in hybrid option, limiting headroom with sunroof, some blind-spots around the car, high price for most models means increased Standard Rate VED tax costs.



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FAST FACTS

Model: Honda ZR-V Advance



Price: £43,545, inc. £650 diamond dust pearl paint

Mechanical: 143 PS 4 cyl 2.0 petrol & 184 PS electric motor, CVT front wheel drive



Max Speed: 108 mph

0 - 62 mph: 8.0 secs

Combined MPG: 53.3

Insurance Group: 35

CO2 emissions: 132 g/km

Tax costs: Bik rating 31%, VED £245FY then £560SR for 5-years

Warranty: 3 years/ 90,000 miles

Size: L 4.57 m (14.99 ft), W 2.10 m (6.89 ft), H 1.62 m (5.31 ft)

Bootspace: 370 to 1301 litres (13.07 to 45.94 cu.ft)

Kerbweight: 1,639 kg (3,613 lb)