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Latest Honda HR-V – Road Test

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NEW GENERATION HONDA HR-V COMPACT SUV READY TO GO.

By David Miles (Miles Better News Agency).

With only a few weeks to go until the new 69 registration plate peak sales month of September, Honda, like many other manufactures, are eager for customers and there is a whole range of offers to attract sales in a new car market still in decline.

Honda, for instance, is currently offering a Test Drive Event with a £750 to £1,000 incentive plus five years complimentary vehicle servicing. Their latest new HR-V compact SUV range should be of interest in a market where SUV sales are not exactly still booming but at least



growing to some extent.

The latest Honda HR-V, five door, five seater range has prices starting from a competitive £20,040 rising to £29,090. The 10 model range is relatively simple with 1.5 i-VTEC normally aspirated petrol or 1.5 VTEC turbo petrol engines and for those higher mileage users there is the 1.6 i-DTEC turbodiesel unit. The petrol units have the choice of six speed manual or CVT automatic gearboxes whilst the diesel is six speed manual gearbox only. Depending on the engine chosen the full range of spec levels is S, SE, EX and the Sport level is only available with the 1.5-litre turbo petrol engine. All versions are 2WD with no 4WD on offer for this generation of refreshed models.



The latest HR-V has revised exterior styling, but somewhat enhanced with its sportier



looking coupé style cabin side profile, with hidden rear door handles integrated into the C-pillar. The side panels have increased sculptured styling lines and the front bumper is sportier looking with deeper air intakes. These also house the front fog lights while the headlights now have projector lenses with LED daytime running lights as standard. The front has the latest Honda 'Solid Wing Face' whilst the rear it has the forward sloping tailgate which emphasises the sporting intent of the revised range, which overall does have a more dynamic appearance. Higher grade models have new 17-inch alloy wheels, the exhaust has a chrome tailpipe and the headlights and rear lights are full LED units. What can't be seen are three under floor covers for the engine, front floor and rear section, which optimise air-flow for improved fuel efficiency.





Inside this SUV becomes more of a family friendly MPV with its clever Honda Magic Seat system. This is perhaps the core reason why the HR-V differs from all other compact SUVs making it more family-use friendly. As it's the one feature which sets this vehicle apart I'll cover it in more detail than usual.

The foundation of the HR-V's spacious and versatile interior is Honda's centre-mounted fuel tank layout. This space-efficient packaging mounts the low profile fuel tank under the front seats which frees up the underfloor space beneath the rear seats. This enables the platform to accommodate the Magic Seat system which is also available on the Honda Jazz.

The Magic Seat system allows each of the 60:40 split second-row seats to adopt numerous configurations to maximise the people and load carrying versatility of the roomy interior. The Magic Seat system can adopt one of three 'modes' from the standard seating position.

Utility mode - the rear seat back folds forward as the seat base itself lowers into the rear passenger footwell, creating a maximum 1,845 mm (72.64 in) long flat floor.

Tall mode - the front of the rear seat base rises up and back and is locked in a vertical position to leave a cargo height of 1,240 mm (48.82 in) from floor to ceiling, allowing tall objects to be placed behind the front seats.

Long mode - the front passenger seat back folds back to a horizontal position, while the rear seat back folds forward, forming a 'tunnel' to accommodate items up to 2,445 mm (96.26 in) long.

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The cargo bay also offers practical space with a capacity of up to 431 litres (15.22 cu.ft) with the rear seats upright, increasing to up to 1,437 litres (50.75 cu.ft) with the rear seats folded. The HR-V's wide tailgate opening (1,180 mm or 46.46 in) and low loading height (650 mm or 25.59 in) makes the cargo space easily accessible.



The latest HR-V sees the introduction of redesigned seats for the driver and front passenger, which incorporate changes to the seat cushion and back rest, providing enhanced overall support - especially for the shoulder area. Otherwise it much of the same as before with the front cockpit style layout but the quality of the soft-touch trim materials looks to have been enhanced. It's certainly not class leading in its layout or quality but it quite acceptable and durable for family use. Better acoustic insulation is used around the front bulkhead, wheel arches and boot area but engine and road noise intrusion is still more evident than some others in this sector.

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As for specification, HR-V base models are fitted as standard with a 5-inch LCD colour display screen in the centre of the dashboard and a 160-watt AM/FM/CD Audio system with four speakers. Mid and upper grade models are fitted with a 180-watt six-speaker audio system. Connectivity and infotainment is provided by the Honda Connect system fitted as standard on the mid and upper grade versions and as an option on the base model.

The system for higher grade models is accessed through a 7-inch touchscreen in the centre of the dash. The display can be customised to suit individual preferences, with two different 'skins' to choose from, allowing users to make the system their own. Colour-coded icons ensure navigating through menus is quick and simple. It sounds simple but it is lacking behind the finesse of other modern systems and the screen needed several proddings to get it to respond.

The Honda Connect system comes with pre-installed apps, with others available for download from the Honda App Centre for owners to personalise their connected experience. The pre-installed 'Aha' app allows access to thousands of audio stations - spanning music, news, podcasts and audio books - as well as social media feeds and location-based services. In addition the system features options for synchronising with smartphones and other personal multimedia devices, WiFi, Bluetooth and HDMI. Also available as standard on higher grade versions is a fully-integrated Garmin satellite navigation system.



All HR-V versions have the now usual active and passive safety technologies. All versions have City Brake Active, mid to upper grade versions have an Advanced Driver Assist system which uses radar sensors plus forward and rearward facing cameras which provides forward collision warning, traffic sign recognition, intelligent speed limiter, lane departure warning and automatic high beam headlight operation. In the Sport model I tried I was surprised to find that it didn't have keyless entry and a push-button start function - which given its Sports billing I found unusual in this class.

My new Honda HR-V test drive model was the Sport with its 1.5 litre VTEC Turbo petrol engine as used in the Civic Sport. It came with the six speed manual gearbox and is priced at £27,840. If a popular PCP finance scheme is required then this model can be yours for £299 a month for a three year repayment period including Honda's £750 contribution.

After recently driving the latest Nissan Qashqai with its new and lovely 1.3 DIG-Turbo 160 hp petrol engine (yes less power but costs a bit more in a better roomier vehicle), highlighted the fact that this HR-V's engine feels harsh to me, which is unusual for a Honda engine. This probably says that the installation is less sophisticated and the sound insulation is less than in the Qashqai. Still the Honda unit is lively but with 240 Nm (177 lb.ft) of torque with the manual gearbox, 220 Nm (162 lb.ft) with the CVT auto transmission, it also has less grunt and response than the Nissan unit. However it is faster at 134 mph and the zero to 62 mph acceleration time is a swift 7.8 seconds, in keeping with the HR-Vs Sport specification.



Using the Eco driving mode noticeably reduces engine performance and in particular responsiveness, and I found it only of use in docile slow moving town traffic or once underway on open roads after cruising speeds had been reached. Travelling on winding country roads in Eco mode severely dented performance.

As for fuel economy the Honda 1.5 VTEC unit has a Combined Cycle figure of 42.2 mpg with CO2 emissions of a high 151 g/km but my week of test driving returned a better real-life figure than that at 44.3 mpg. The First Year VED road tax is £530 before the Standard rate cost of £145. Company car drivers will pay 34% Benefit-in-Kind tax, insurance is Group 27E and warranty 3-years/90,000-miles which is generous compared to some others in this class.

Ride comfort was generally good as was road holding given its elevated ride height. The HR-V has a beam rear axle which tended not to absorb even medium sized imperfections in the



road surface. A pothole impact from one wheel, being a beam axle design, tended to transfer the resulting impact through both sides of the car, not just the wheel affected. A small issue I know but all these issues including limited sound insulation and high taxes do add up to the latest HR-V being capable but not class-leading in what has become a very competitive market sector.



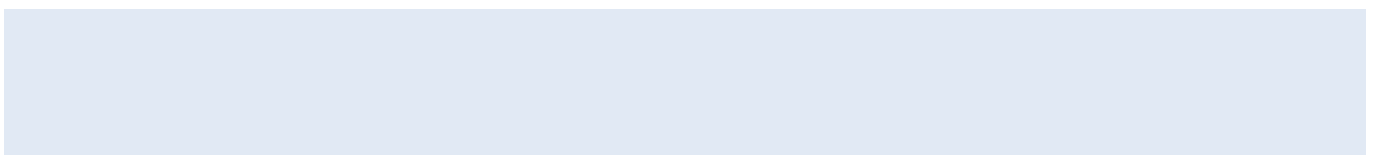
VERDICT

A highly practical family vehicle, albeit not the best in its class.



For: Good sports exterior styling, reasonable equipment level, its strong point is the versatile Magic Seating function, good real-life fuel economy.

Against: High taxes, engine and road noise intrusion, sluggish touchscreen operation, no push button start or keyless entry functions for this Sport spec level, no 4WD models in an SUV class.





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

New Honda HR-V Sport 1.5 VTEC manual compact SUV, 2WD.

Price: £27,840.

Engine/transmission: 1.5 litre, four cylinder turbo petrol 182 hp, 240 Nm (177 lb.ft) from 1,900 rpm, six speed manual, 2WD.

Performance: 134 mph, 0-62 mph 7.8 seconds.

Fuel consumption: WLTP Combined Cycle 42.2 mpg (44.3 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 151 g/km, VED road tax £530/£145, BiK company car tax 34%.

Insurance Group: 27E.

Warranty: Three years/90,000 miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,346 mm (14.26 ft), W 1,790 mm (5.87 ft), H 1,605 mm (5.27 ft), wheelbase 2,610 mm (8.56 ft), boot 431 to 1,473 litres (15.22 to 50.75 cu.ft)s, braked towing weight 1,400 kg (3,086 lb), five doors/five seats.