



Toyota Corolla Hatchback – Road Test

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The latest Toyota Corolla Hatchback Design 1.8 Hybrid tried and tested by Robin Roberts (and Miles Better News Agency).

However you look at it, the Toyota Corolla is remarkable among models and, perhaps not surprisingly as a result, is the world's best-selling nameplate over six decades.



Now in its 12th generation, the Corolla is the first to use the company's fifth generation hybrid petrol electric technology in its 1.8 engines coming from North Wales and the vehicles are all assembled in its Burnaston, Derby plant, so it's one of the British motor industry's success stories.



The latest Corolla Hybrid comes with intelligent cruise control; improved pre-collision system, cross-over avoidance; emergency driving stop and over the air updates to essential data, as well as convenience package including T2 Smart Connect with 10.5-inch display; wireless charging; 12.3-inch digital combimeter; rain sensing wipers; parking sensors; smart entry and auto-folding door mirrors.

All these change under the skin are complemented by refreshed front and rear styling and



trim improvements. They don't come cheap, however, and the new 16-model, four grade hatchback and touring sports series with 140 hp 1.8 or 196 hp 2.0 engines span a price range from £30,210 to £36,860.

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The range begins with the Icon level while the most popular is the Design specification we tested with a 1.8 litre engine costing £31,780. But you can also enthuse over the GR Sport and top level Excel.

The new Deeside-built 1.8 Hybrid is the result of a £465,000 investment and is a highly refined unit which prioritises and optimises the electric motor to keep down emissions while smoothing power delivery and having it in reserve to give a boost when needed through the latest lighter weight and more compact power control unit which monitors the driver's use of the throttle and a new differential.

There is no denying the new engine and power responsive self-charging battery are eager performers, delivering a very smooth, consistent and quiet output with the lightest of pedal pressure. Matched to an electronically controlled automatic transmission without gears the result is very much a squirt and stick with it sort of powertrain.

We were really surprised at how well the Corolla Hatchback went from standstill, when overtaking and then cruising and it was remarkable to see up to 63 mpg attained on some trips.

Very smooth power steering gave excellent feedback and responses were good, turning circle compact and everything was vibration-free. Brakes underfoot were up to task with very light pressure and the electric parking brake was strong.

The usual secondary controls were close to fingers around the wheel and column with



comfort features on the central console for heating or set below the very big infotainment screen in the centre of the fascia.

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Heating and ventilation was very simple and effective, backed up by powered windows but no sunroof.

Front and rear windows quickly demisted, the door mirrors were electrically adjustable and heated with a reverse-down function as well. I would have preferred a bigger rear window than the design created but I liked the big and efficient wash wipe system on the screens and the intelligent headlights with long and wide beams.



Once or twice, however, I thought the auto setting was slow to respond to oncoming vehicles and it even dipped and then returned when it encountered reflective road signs.

Oddment room in the front and back was modest for a family car and a lack of USBs for those behind could be annoying, while the boot capacity was about average until you progressively dropped the offset seat backs to raise volume.

Access to the boot was good with a high rear cill over which to place or remove items, but the back doors did not open very wide and the legroom in the back was not generous when the front seats were fully extended.

Driver and passenger had a much easier time with usable adjustment setting and a lot more room with heating elements and their seats were nicely shaped and more supporting than the flatter rear bench seats.



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The Toyota Corolla Hatch is not a sports car but a driver can select eco, normal or sport modes on the powertrain as well as a suitable range of instruments' displayed and it covered ground briskly and was very surefooted with no handling vices or concerns.

The comparative lack of powertrain noise or wind waffling meant the road rumbles were more noticeable and ever present and also served to display how well the suspension coped on any surface to produce a generally smooth journey interrupted only by the occasional deep pothole or tarmac ridge.

VERDICT

I know the new 12th generation Toyota Corolla Hatch looks expensive even compared to the



previous series let alone the original models, and it has not really grown in size within its sector, but it is a remarkably refined car with desirable equipment and some clever technology.

It is certainly a worthy successor to its forebears.

For: Excellent economy, effortless driving, good ride, safe handling, very well equipped, sophisticated and smooth.

Against: Tight rear leg and headroom with small opening rear doors, modest loadspace and oddments room throughout, some road noise.





FAST FACTS

Toyota Corolla Hatchback Design 1.8 Hybrid

Price: £31,780

Mechanical: 138 bhp 1.8 Litre 4 cyl, petrol hybrid, e-CVT

Max Speed: 112 mph

0 - 62mph: 9.1 sec

Combined MPG: 45.5

Insurance Group: 17E

C02 emissions: 104 g/km

Tax costs: Bik rating 25%, VED £160FY, £155SR

Warranty: Up to 100,000 miles

Size: L 4.37 m (14.34 ft), W 1.79 m (5.87 ft), H 1.46 m (4.79 ft)

Bootpace: 361 litres (12.75 cu.ft)

Kerbweight: 1,410 kg (3,109 lb)