

The Toyota RAV4 Takes the Hybrid Route

Toyota has added a further model to their line up of hybrids, the RAV4. This their first SUV to feature this technology which has proved so successful on a global basis.

The forecast from Toyota is that by the year 2020 fifty percent of their sales will go to hybrid vehicles in the UK and already their tactic of offering hybrid technology to their small cars is certainly paying off.

In Northern Ireland we have been slower to join the hybrid bandwagon as diesel is still the preferred choice for many drivers.



One aspect that may disappoint in our market is the fact that there is not an all wheel drive version diesel offered with the new RAV4.

Clearly Toyota is aiming to attract customers who desire all wheel drive to move towards a hybrid, I must point out that there is also two wheel drive versions of the new hybrid RAV4. I have had the opportunity to try both two wheel drive and all wheel drive versions and both have their merits and both share the same power output just shy of 200bhp thus the most powerful RAV4 to date.

So the question rightly asked by many, "why buy an all wheel drive version"? Ideal for

winter driving, slippery surfaces and improved traction and grip. For those who feel that these are not essential requirements then two wheel drive is adequate and of course there is a price premium for all wheel drive.

The new hybrid employs a 2.5 litre petrol engine, the all wheel drive versions feature two electric motors, one front and one rear while the two wheel version features just one electric motor located up front.

An added bonus for all wheel drive versions is added towing capacity at 1,650kgs, very useful for agri use and leisure use.

I discovered brisk performance with both versions; rest to 62mph in 8.4 seconds and with CO2 emissions as low as 115g/km. yet another plus class leading fuel economy from 57.6mpg, thus rivaling diesel economy figures.

Looking at the hybrid system, it draws power from both the petrol engine and electric motors to maximise efficiency and achieve the best balance of driving performance and economy.

The task of the electric motor is to act as a high output generator during deceleration and braking to provide a regenerative braking function, capturing the kinetic energy that would normally be lost as heat and storing it as electricity in the hybrid system battery.

With the RAV4 hybrid comes four drive modes thus allowing the driver to enjoy the full potential of the system, including an all electric mode which lasts under two miles.



The transmission is a sequential shiftmatic with a sport drive mode; I found the system was much smoother in operation with the two wheel drive version.

The exterior styling of the new RAV4 is pleasing to the eye with a touch of quality and that extends to the interior with wide use of materials which give this Toyota model a premium feel for the first time.



The latest technology is another key feature with a 4.2 inch TFT multi function display and Toyota Touch 2, Touch 2 with Go and Touch 2 with Go Plus multimedia and navigation systems and a seven inch touch screen control.

With five grades to choose from, including provision for the business user, according to Toyota more sales will go the direction of the private buyer.

The grades are, Active, Business Edition, Business Edition Plus, Icon and Excel. All models with the exception of the entry level Active can have Toyota Safety Sense as an option.

Prices for the newcomer start at £23,695 and there are a number of purchase options available to make it easier to become a RAV4 owner.

The trend currently is that owners of estate cars, MPVs etc are now moving to SUVs and Toyota sees the new RAV4 as a major player in this ever increasing market.

Summing up the new RAV4 scores in three key areas, styling, quality and technology.

Ian Lynas