

Fourth Generation Toyota RAV4

Toyota launched the first RAV4 in 1994 and with it came the creation of the modern SUV and at one point I was amongst the many satisfied owners.

So I was really looking forward to my Test Drive with the fourth generation model and it is worth noting that this sector of the market in Europe is one of the few which shows expansion.



Three generations of RAV4 have been sold in more than 150 countries worldwide, amassing sales above 4.5 million. European markets have accounted for more than 1.2 million units, while in the UK cumulative sales up to the end of 2012 neared 155,500.

Taking into account the views of customers customers they talked about good manoeuvrability, ease of access, a good view from the steering wheel, clever packaging, versatility and reassuring performance, even in tough conditions.

Therefore the latest version of the RAV4 has been developed in response to evolving customer requirements, targeting couples and families with active lifestyles who value more space and versatility. This is something I found with an earlier generation model which was in my keep for almost three years.

The new model reflects a stronger emphasis on family use, without sacrificing the model's core values of manoeuvrability, versatility, an elevated view of the road and accomplished performance on and off-road.

The RAV4 has become more sophisticated with dynamic styling, a more refined interior design using high-quality materials, more space on board for people and their luggage and improved comfort, versatility and safety. In fact most of the key elements which people now demand from their vehicle.

I discovered much improved handling and comfort levels thanks to a retuned suspension system, revised steering and a new Sport mode added to the Integrated Dynamic Drive System on all-wheel drive models, this delivers greater stability and agility on wet and dry roads and delivers a more engaging driving experience.

Thanks to an extra 100mm in the wheelbase this allows for more space in the cabin, on a par with vehicles from the next segment up.

The 60:40 split-folding rear seats have been made more comfortable with an increase in cushion angle and new, more supportive side bolsters. The seats fold almost flush to the floor with no need to remove the cushions or headrests and each section of the 60:40 divide can be independently reclined.

More load space with 1,025mm added to its length, increasing capacity to 547 litres and the under tray beneath the load area has gained an extra 51 litres to provide 100 litres of storage.

Compared to the previous model, new RAV4's maximum load carrying ability has grown by 256 litres to 1,167 litres, increasing to 1,746 litres when loaded to the roof.

The new model features its cleanest and most efficient engine line-up yet, with reduced CO₂ emissions across the board. There is a new two litre D-4D diesel with Toyota Stop & Start technology, powering all 2WD versions and CO₂ emissions of 127g/km for 2WD RAV4 with 2.0 D-4D engine, a new low for the model and attracting zero road tax in the first year.

Engine choice also includes improved two litre Valvematic petrol with Multidrive S CVT, and 2.2-litre D-4D diesel with six-speed manual or designated D-CAT automatic transmission.

Summing up the best RAV4 to date by far and one with a good deal more road presence.

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