

# THE ALL-NEW HONDA CIVIC

By Jim Mc Cauley



Honda quite rightly claim that the Civic is in a league of its own and now the company's mainstay European seller is launched as an all-new development which retains the unique design cues of the outgoing model. Expanding the model range for the world market, the new Civic is the result of the largest single development programme in Honda's history.

The relationship to the previous model is obvious, but the new car is longer, lower and wider, built on a new platform with smaller but nevertheless more powerful engines. Styling-wise, the lines of the current car are teased out

into a more elegant coupé-like body which provides improved interior space and greater occupant comfort.

Maintaining their class-leading engineering innovation, the new car débuts two new VTEC turbo petrol engines and a comprehensive suite of safety and driver-assisting technologies which are standard across the entire model range.

The two new petrol engines comprise a 1.0 litre, 129PS unit and a 1.5 litre 182PS unit, both turbocharged. Test choice was the 1.5 litre model, finished in the lowest of the three trim levels available with this engine – Sport, Sport Plus and Prestige. Asserting its Sport badging, this model sees the benchmark acceleration from rest to 62mph in just 8.2 seconds. But its real attraction is in its overall performance and pace, especially its forgiving rev band which allows excellent response from almost any engine speed, and contributes to the car's overall smoothness as well as performance.

For the driver, a lower seating position adds to the sporting nature of the car, while the new suspension set-up delivers exceptional handling as well as maintaining overall ride comfort.



Contributing to this success is the new platform which although lighter than that of the outgoing model has a 52% increase in torsional stiffness. And to maintain the performance response, the steering system is a development of that used in the previous Civic Type R, and is further refined to provide quick response and excellent feed-back. Taken together, the handling package reflects the major commitment of the development programme to produce a car worthy of the Sport badging.



For the driver, there is a wide range of steering and seat adjustments while the speedometer gives a clear digital read-out within the outer rev-counter band. The dash panel steps into a central 'floating' console, behind which there are storage and connection points for charging and media downloading which can then be controlled by the 7-inch colour touch-screen. The standard infotainment system features Garmin navigation and supports Apple Carplay, Android Auto, internet radio and internet browsing. The screen also provides the output for the rear parking camera, another standard feature of the 1.5 litre models, as are front and rear parking sensors.

For the occupants, there is more space in both the front and rear while there is also a gain in boot space to 478 litres, extendible to a fairly level platform with one-touch folding of the rear seat backs. A novel feature of the luggage compartment is the side swiping cover which replaces the traditional parcel shelf.

The interior of the Sport model is finished in dark cloth with a charcoal roof lining, and there is dual control automatic air conditioning to maintain the comfort of the occupants.

In addition to the comfort of the occupants, their safety is a major development in the new Civic range with a comprehensive package of electronic support technologies assisting both handling and driver responses. Presented as 'Honda Sensing' these include Vehicle Stability Assist with Hill Holder function, Forward Collision Warning with braking, Lane Departure Warning and Traffic Sign Recognition system.

Forward Collision Warning uses a camera and radar to scan the road ahead and will provide visual and audible warnings to advise the driver to take action in the likely event of a collision. If there is no appropriate response, the brakes will be automatically applied to bring the car to a stop. The Traffic Sign Recognition system allows the driver to engage a further option which will regulate the car's speed in relation to the last speed limit sign. The extended safety package is in anticipation of the car achieving the maximum 5-star EuroNCAP safety award when tested.

Overall, the 1.5 litre Sport model asserts its road presence with larger wheels, lower stance, twin central exhausts and additional roof spoiler which enhances the coupé appearance of the car as well as providing the practical functions of greater downforce and improved aerodynamic flow.

It is a larger and more elegant car than its predecessor, but it gains in performance, refinement and handling as well as its class-leading technologies – standard across the entire model range. While the model tested featured the standard 6-speed manual gearbox, Honda's tried and tested CVT automatic transmission is optional on both engine sizes.

In terms of running costs, the 1.5 VTEC turbo has an official combined fuel consumption of 48.7 mpg and for those who wish to stretch economy to the limits, then the car has an Economy mode option, switchable start / stop function and a gear change indicator on the instrument cluster.

The model tested is listed at £22,540 and is in Group 22E for insurance purposes. For additional peace of mind, a 5-year servicing plan is available for £599 and all models are covered by Honda's comprehensive warranty programme.

(Driven May 2017)