

HONDA CIVIC TOURER

By Jim Mc Cauley



Honda has extended the appeal of its 'C' sector Civic range with the addition of an estate variant. Uniquely for the Japanese manufacturer, the vehicle has been designed and built in Europe for the European market only. Manufactured alongside the hatchback range in Swindon, it is available with a choice of the company's 1.8 litre petrol engine or the 1.6 litre diesel, introduced last year.

Styling-wise, the Tourer is a simple extension of the hatchback with the lines of the original design abandoning their abrupt curtailment to extend their flow across the pronounced rear wheelarches to greet the falling roofline as it pinches the rear glass area. It may be a simple extension of the original hatchback, but it dramatically alters the personality of the car to assert its individuality.

At its UK launch, both engine options were tried, starting with the petrol model. This 1.8 litre unit produces 142 PS and is available in both manual and automatic guises, the test drive featuring the 6-speed manual 'box. This returns a 0-62 mph time of 9.2 seconds and a potential top speed of 130 mph. On road, the car is refined and quiet, but lacks the enthusiastic response of the diesel model. Being finished in the highest specification trim of EX Plus, the car was fitted as standard with the adaptive damping system. This provides a dial-in choice of Comfort, Normal and Dynamic settings, allowing the driver to set the response rate of the rear shock absorbers to suit individual preferences. With a different front suspension set-up from the diesel, and particularly in Comfort setting, the petrol model offered a softer and more acceptable ride than the diesel, possibly suiting



the more refined and less urgent response of the petrol car.

On the other hand, the 1.6 litre diesel, producing 120 PS, has the upper hand in the performance comparison thanks to its 300 Nm of torque from 2000 rpm. While its 0-62 mph time is 10.1 seconds, its overall smoothness and ever-ready power delivery gives it the clear edge. Like the petrol model, its also drives through a 6-speed manual gearbox, but unlike the petrol model tested, the diesel suspension overall appears firmer, accompanied by more road noise. In both cases, steering and brakes offer excellent response and the new addition has lost none of the dynamic attributes of the hatchback.

Cabin layout is familiar Civic with the flip-up rear seat retained and the obvious extension of the Tourer load bay, stretching the overall length of the car by 235 mm to provide 624 litres. Like the hatchback, the fuel tank remains mid-vehicle allowing for a twin level boot. While the main floor allows level access over the rear bumper, the space underneath can comfortably accommodate two cabin approved luggage cases, offering additional security as well as space.

Equipment levels progress through four levels with the second level SE Plus model aiming to be the popular choice adding front and rear parking sensors with reversing camera along with automatic lights and wipers, and larger 17-inch alloy wheels.



Overall, the Tourer addition to the Civic range adds increased practicality for those who require additional load space without sacrificing the driving dynamics of the hatchback. The cars also perform well with regards to economy and environmental credentials, the diesel model doing particularly well. The petrol model returns 45.6 mpg on the official combined cycle with a CO2 emissions of 146 gms/km. On the other hand, the diesel has a combined figure of 74.3 mpg giving it a range of over 800 miles on a tankful of fuel, while a CO2 emissions of 99 gms/km further adds to its appeal.

Among the extras available is the Driver Assistance Safety Pack which uses a combination of camera / laser / radar systems to help the driver reduce possible accident risks. The model range is priced from £20,265 and is covered by a 3-year / 90,000 mile warranty and 12-year anti-corrosion guarantee. The new Tourer has a 5-star EuroNCAP rating and starts in Group 15E for insurance purposes.