

TOYOTA C-HR HYBRID

By Jim Mc Cauley



Toyota has launched its all-new C-HR to compete in the growing Crossover segment of the market.

Styling-wise, the car is a stunning composition of flowing lines supported by the projecting wheelarches at each corner which emphasise the vehicle's strength and rigidity. A tapering roof-line and discreet rear door handles give the car a coupé-like appearance and a strong sporting image with its raised ground clearance asserting its supremacy. From any angle, the C-HR looks extremely appealing and it will confidently establish itself as an additional core product for Toyota.

Motive power in the new range is a two-way choice between a 1.2 litre turbo-petrol unit and an electric-petrol hybrid system which is the subject of this test drive at the model's European début in Spain.

Toyota are world leaders in hybrid development and significantly the C-HR is the first such model to be built outside of Japan. The all-European model has a similar set-up to the Prius in which a 1.8 litre petrol engine is combined with two electric motors to improve both performance and range. In keeping with Toyota's engineering advancements, both the petrol engine and hybrid system have been extensively developed from previous applications and this is now the fourth generation application in which all aspects have been further refined. One of the electric motors serves primarily as a generator, converting any surplus power from the petrol engine into electricity, which can be stored in the battery. It also serves as the engine's starter motor. The second motor is the electric drive motor which also acts as a generator during braking. It powers the car from start-up, at low speed and in electric-only mode. It is also the sole power unit when the vehicle is reversing. The





combined power output is 120bhp while a CO2 emissions as low as 86gms/km leaves it free of road tax.

On-road, and the initial mileage is covered in electric-only mode before the need for the engine to cut in. The car is fully automatic driving through its constantly variable transmission (CVT) which delivers overall smoothness with appropriate gear choice. The car responds well to throttle input and provides a relaxed driving experience. It is solely automatic with no optional fixed ratios for manual override which would be preferable for sharper open road response and for planning

overtaking manoeuvres. Although the 1.2 litre petrol version is also available in all-wheel drive, the hybrid model is available only in front-wheel drive. With regards to benchmark statistics, the hybrid can accelerate from rest to 62mph in 11 seconds with a potential top speed of 105mph. Overall performance is quite good, although the workings of the CVT transmission dominate in an otherwise well insulated cabin. Ride is well cushioned and although the C-HR is higher than the Auris, body roll is well controlled and overall ride is pleasantly cushioned.

In terms of running costs, the hybrid has the upper hand compared to the petrol-only model with a substantially greater fuel consumption given as 74.3mpg overall, but stretching in official figures to 83.1mpg in town.

In addition to the ride comfort of the car, one of its other great comforts is the interior, which is warm and welcoming. For the driver, the layered dash design provides a good field of vision from the main instrument binnacle to the central 8-inch infotainment screen while overall cabin materials have class-leading sensory quality to compete against the interiors of premium brand models. Front seats are comfortable with excellent side support on both the base and back, while the rear seat folds 2:1 to accommodate additional luggage when not required for passengers.



Equipment levels are high in the new C-HR across all three specification levels with safety a major consideration. All UK models come with the Toyota Safety Sense package which includes a Pre-collision System with pedestrian warning, Adaptive Cruise Control, Lane Departure Alert with steering control, Automatic High Beam and Road Sign Assist. The Pre-collision Safety system calculates the risk of a collision and automatically alerts the driver. If the driver fails to respond, the brakes are applied automatically to avoid the collision or reduce its impact.

Other active safety measures standard across the range include Traction Control, Vehicle Stability Control and Hill Start Assist.

Specification levels start with the Icon which includes dual-zone automatic air condition, 17-inch alloys, Toyota Touch 2 multi-media system, front fog lights, and rain sensing wipers.



Safety is again a major feature of the Excel specification and this mid-specification level comes with a complement of driver assistance safety features including Blind Spot Monitor, Rear Cross Traffic Alert, and Lane Change Assist. Other upgrades include part leather upholstery, heated front seats, keyless entry, parking sensors with Park Assist and 18-inch alloys.

Top Dynamic trim adds standard metallic paint with contrasting black roof, privacy glass, LED front lights and a bespoke purple upholstery fabric.

Overall, Toyota's new addition will have widespread appeal, both for the hybrid engineering of the vehicle and its 15 per cent BIK for business users as well as the favourable PCP deals for the private purchaser through 'Access Toyota'. Sales are predicted to be clearly biased towards the hybrid model which starts at £23,595. All versions are covered by Toyota's comprehensive 5-year / 100,000 mile warranty.

(Driven November 2016)