

Road Beat: 2017 Honda Civic Hatchback Sport, wow



The 2017 Honda Civic Hatchback Sport is fun to drive.
Photos/Larry Weitzman

By Larry Weitzman

I remarked in several recent Road Beats that Honda was on a roll. After testing this new Honda Civic Hatchback Sport, I have to report that the roll is accelerating and rather quickly.

Here is a car with loads of utility, outstanding performance, great fuel economy, superb handling and good comfort for a sticker price of \$22,135 with the boat ride from Swindon, Wiltshire, England. (Don't they have some great names in England?)

Not only was the new Civic Hatch Sport built in England, the engine comes from Thailand and the 6-speed manual cog swapper was assembled in India. It's a world-class car right out of the box.

Civic's new design is its best yet; sleek and stylish with a long character line emphasizing its muscle and strong flanks. The grille is a little big, but the car's substantial width of 71 inches not only improves handling, but enhances its aggressive stance.

Powering up this Hatchback Sport is a more powerful version of its new 1.5L DOHC, 16 valve, direct injected turbo inline four. Belting out 180 hp @ 5,500 rpm and 177 pounds of twist from 1,900-5,000 rpm, it bests all Civic engines by at least 6 hp and 15 pounds of twist. It is also more powerful than the 180 hp more expensive and top of the line Sport Touring model in that the Sport gets its peak hp 500 rpm earlier and retains the 15-pound torque advantage. However, the Sport when equipped with Honda's superb CVT (instead of the manual six-speeder in my tester) has the identical engine output numbers as the Sport Touring model.



Specifications

Engine

1.5L turbocharged, direct injected, DOHC, 16 valve inline four cylinder 180 hp @ 5,500 rpm

177 lb.-ft. of torque @
1,900-5,000 rpm

Redline 6,500 rpm

Fuel requirement both
engines regular unleaded

Transmission

Six speed manual

CVT

Configuration

Transverse mounted front
engine/front wheel drive

Dimensions

Wheelbase 106.3 inches

Length 177.9 inches

Width 70.8 inches

Height 56.3 inches

Track (f/r) 60.5/61.1 inches

Weight 2,871

Weight distribution (f/r)
60/40

Fuel capacity 12.39 gallons

Trunk capacity 22.6 cubic
feet

Passenger volume 97.2 cubic
feet

Wheels 18X7.5 inch alloys

Tires 235/40X18W

Steering lock to lock 2.11
turns

Turning circle 37.8 feet

Performance

0-60 mph 6.99 seconds

50-70 mph 3.80 seconds

50-70 mph up a 6-7 % grade
5.07 seconds

Top speed 130 mph easy

Fuel economy EPA rated at

30/39/33 mpg
city/highway/combined.
Expect 36 mpg overall and 45
plus mpg on the highway at
legal speeds.

Performance for the Hatch Sport was excellent for a compact with a 0-60 mph time of 6.99 seconds and 50-70 mph passing times (level and uphill) of 3.80 and 5.07 seconds. But here is where it gets interesting, the 180 hp CVT tranny model does better as it posted times of 6.48, 3.42 and 4.63 seconds, an improvement of about half a second in each category. The engine is incredible smooth and quiet, at least on the inside as it has, centered under the rear bumper, a set of menacing paired exhausts. But there is more.

Civic sips fuel and through a narrow straw at that. EPA rates the Sport manual at 30/39/33 mpg city/highway/combined. As usual, those numbers are very conservative as in 350 miles of driving, including all performance testing, it averaged 36.6 mpg. On a level highway with the cruise set at 70 mph its two-way average was 46.1 mpg. A round trip over the Sierra to Lake Tahoe averaged 41.6 mpg. But here again, the CVT outperforms the manual with an overall average of 38.5 mpg and a highway average 50.7 mpg. Fuel capacity for the new Civic is smaller at 12.4 gallons, but even with that small tank, highway range is a comfortable 400 miles, when most people need a pit stop anyway. Unless you crave right arm, left foot exercise, spend the grand or so for the CVT. My test numbers clearly demonstrate the efficiency of new Honda CVT tranny. Best CVT in the business.

Civic Hatch Sport gets the same big meats as the Sport Touring Civic, 235/40 mounted on some good looking 18 inch blacked out alloys. Suspension is small car state of the art MacPherson Struts up front and a multilink system in the rear with stab bars at both ends. Track is a wide 61 inches front and rear

while the steering is a go-kart like 2.1 turns lock to lock. And, yes, it goes around corners and changes directions like water in a hose. Civic Hatch Sport tips the scales at less than 2,900 pounds and the CVT adds less than 70 pounds which also helps in all aspects of handling. Feedback and feel are near perfect with a very crisp turn-in and great off and on center feel. It definitely rivals the Mazda 3 and then some.

The ride is very smooth, quiet and supple. You could do some serious traveling in this ride. More on that later. The CVT brings another advantage, lower rpms at cruise as the manual spins 2,700 at 60 mph and the CVT spins a very low 1,900 which makes the CVT perhaps a skooch quieter and improves the highway fuel economy as reflected above.

Safety is standard on the Hatch Sport as in all Hondas with four-wheel disc brakes, ABS and all the other acronyms, plenty of airbags, backup camera, LED DRLs and more. But things like lane departure warning, blind spot monitoring, auto high beams are not available. Most of these items are optional or standard on other model Civics. This is a driver's car.

Inside are some comfortable seats and a surprising amount of room. The trunk of the hatchback has a volume of over 22 cubic feet and with the second row folded flat that volume more than doubles. In fact, when you combine the 97.2 cubic feet of passenger volume, this Civic is less than a half a cubic foot shy of a large car volume as defined by the EPA and giving the Civic awesome utility.

Instruments are all business, big tach, with a digital speedo inset, flanking graphic ancillary gauges and a trip computer. Perfect. Materials are all first rate as you would expect from Honda and the rear seating is good with the four doors.

But the Civic Hatch Sport is more basic. It has everything you need and not much else. Power windows and mirrors are standard of course as is the AM/FM fine sounding stereo with media

connections and Bluetooth with steering wheel controls. No Sirius/xm, no Nav. This Hatch Sport is geared more to the enthusiast driver who is looking for an inexpensive, entertaining daily driver.

Civic Hatch Sport does it all while being very entertaining in the drive, offering good comfort, great performance, fabulous fuel economy and its utility and roominess.

Pricing for the Civic Hatchback Sport is one size fits all, \$21,300 plus \$835 for the Atlantic crossing. Floor mats and a full tank of gas are part of the deal. Don't ask for less and you don't need more. This Civic moves (quickly at that) to the top of the class.

Larry Weitzman has been into cars since he was 5 years old. At 8 he could recite from memory the hp of every car made in the U.S. He has put in thousands of laps on racetracks all over the Western United States.