

Road Beat: Toyota C-HR a small eco CUV



The biggest flaw of 2018 Toyota C-HR is that it doesn't come with AWD. Photos/Larry Weitzman

By Larry Weitzman

Loosely based on the Corolla (iM) platform, the new C-HR presents a daring iteration of a subcompact CUV which segment is rapidly growing in the market place. Outrageously styled, it looks to be after the market started by two other outrageously styled CUVs, the first not being a CUV, but used as such the Kia Soul and the other being the Nissan Juke. The Soul is too small to be considered in the small class, but the Juke is more the target, although the Juke is also smaller than the C-HR.

C-HR, while having avant-garde styling, has a much better,

more cohesive look. Its top line is beautifully done and flows smoothly from the top of the windshield to the rear end. The roof spoiler is beautifully integrated, the single character line, body sculpt is unique and works well and the massive tail lights which bulge from the rear like rocket launchers add muscle, style and shape. While other small CUVs have a quirky look, the C-HR stands out as a creative, good looking, styling exercise. Nice job Toyota.

Size wise, the C-HR is 10 inches shorter than your average compact car with a length of 171 inches. But it's relatively wide at 71 inches, which Toyota uses wisely by widening the track to 61 inches front and rear. It stands a tall 62 inches.

You are given a choice of one engine, a low stressed, 2.0L DOHC, 16 valve inline four knocking out 144 hp at 6,100 rpm and 139 pounds of twist at a low 3,900 rpm. If there is an issue with the C-HR, it is perhaps an underwhelming powerplant relative to its styling performance promise. But it is an extremely smooth engine and running platform. Power is sent to the front wheels only via a smooth CVT.



Specifications

Engine

2.0L DOHC, 16 Valve inline
four cylinder 144 hp @ 6,100
rpm

139 lb.-ft. of torque @
3,900 rpm

Transmission

CVT

Configuration

Transverse mounted front engine/front wheel drive

Dimensions

Wheelbase 103.9 inches

Length 171.2 inches

Width 70.7 inches

Height 61.6 inches

Track (f/r) 60.6/60.6 inches

Ground clearance 5.9 inches

Fuel capacity 13.2 gallons

Cargo volume (rear seats up/down 36.4/19.0 cubic feet

Interior volume 102.8 cubic feet

Turning circle 34.2 feet

Steering lock to lock 2.76 turns

Wheels 18X7 inch alloys

Tires 225/50X18

Weight 3,300 pounds

GVWR 4,330 pounds

Performance

0-60 mph 8.66 seconds

50-70 mph 4.40 seconds

50-70 mph (up hill 6-7 % grade) 8.15 seconds

Top speed well into triple digits

Fuel economy EPA rated at 27/31/29 mpg

city/highway/combined.

Expect 28-29 mpg in rural/country driving and 35

mpg on a level highway at

legal speeds.

As to performance, the C-HR is about mid-pack among compact cars with a 0-60 mph of 8.66 seconds. Passing performance is perhaps a little better with a 50-70 mph level accel run of 4.40 seconds while up a steep grade that number expands to 8.15 seconds. The numbers reflect better performance than the feel. Tip-in is a bit weak and nailing the go-pedal on a steep grade is a leisurely experience. Yes, I have tested vehicles with much worse numbers, but the feel is not one of a strong response. Most drivers will find the performance more than adequate.

At times the performance feels better depending on the driving situation. That is possibly a result of the CVT tranny which operates with complete smoothness and maximum efficiency. During some performance runs there were times it felt like a decided "shift" taking place, like it had a planetary gear box, which it doesn't. This is not an issue, only a comment as to the operation of the CVT. Maybe Toyota is trying to give the C-HR the characteristics of having a "gearbox."

Fuel economy is quite good with an EPA rating of 27/31/29 mpg city/highway/combined and the C-HR does a bit better with a 35.1 mpg number being recorded in a two-way highway run at 70 mph. My tester had the optional (and stylish) removable crossbars attached and that might have affected highway mileage by an mpg or more to the negative. In other words, without the crossbars the C-HR might have reached 36-37 mpg in my highway test, although they looked fairly streamlined. Overall 28.8 mpg was the average in 504 miles of aggressive rural and suburban driving. In my Placerville-Carson City round trip the average was 32.1 mpg and from South Lake Tahoe to Placerville. Good solid numbers for a small SUV.

In another strong suit for the C-HR, handling is exemplary with four-wheel independent suspension with double wishbones hold up the rear, stab bars are at both ends, quick steering

(2.76 lock to lock), a wide 61-inch track and big 18X7 inch alloys shod with some serious 225/50 series rubber. When you add up all the creds, C-HR could stand for competent handling ride. And it is just that with oodles of cornering power, accurate steering, excellent roll control and crisp turn in. Its handling mimics a good sport sedan, with confident cornering power and decent feedback. Turning circle is a tight 34 feet. Nice job, Toyota.

Ride quality is especially quiet and eerily smooth, so smooth and quiet it was actually noticeable. And it handled bumps with aplomb. Engine speed was a remarkable 1,800 rpm at 70 mph which contributes to the excellent highway mileage. But the fuel tank is just 13.2 gallons, but that is still a 400-mile range, which is beyond most human capacity.

Safety is also standard with the C-HR with a full complement of safety features usually extra cost on other cars, like Toyota Safety Sense which includes pre-collision braking, lane departure warning with steering assist, auto high beams and radar cruise. Those are nice features to have as standard equipment. Ten airbags are also standard along with about every safety acronym. Blind spot monitor and rear cross traffic alert are standard, but the rear view camera, located in the rear view mirror would be nicer in the big center screen.

Brakes are large four wheel discs (front ventilated) and headlights, while not LED, are projector beam halogen and they are very good.

Inside in my non-premium XLE model was done in a hearty cloth with very comfortable seating in front. I didn't try the rear seats although when tested by a 175 pound, 5-foot 10-inch teenager created no complaints. Maybe it beat walking. The IP was legible and was well done with a big tach and speedo left and right flanking the center info center/trip computer. All materials were top quality. While not huge, rear storage

offered copious space, a flat floor and access was easy.

Now here's the good part, pricing. Sticker for a scant \$22,500 plus \$960 for the boat from Arifiye, Turkey (yes, this Toyota was made in Turkey in Asia Minor. Cars are now world class simply by location of the assembly plant) this C-HR completely equipped. The only options were the special Radiant Green/white top two tone paint (\$500), which received an amazing amount of positive compliments along with the C-HR itself, the crossbars (\$299, floor mats (\$194), mud guards (\$125) and some other small items brought the total to \$24,969 all in. About the only negative is AWD is not an option.

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.