

Road Beat: Honda Accord Touring improved for '18



The 2018 Honda Accord Touring is new and improved. Photos/Larry Weitzman

By Larry Weitzman

Competition and free markets are a wonderful thing. And the competition in the mid-size sedan market is beyond fierce. Toyota's new Camry set some new standards so what does its chief rival do, try to do something better. Honda hopes it exceeded the Camry with its new Accord. Did it? The cars are so close, it almost comes down to which headlight assembly looks better? Honda wins that one, but what about the rest of the new Accord?

My tester was the top of the line Touring 2.0T with a 10-speed auto torque converter cog swapper which is perhaps a tie in as

this new Accord starts its tenth generation. Everything was standard, no extras. It had everything anyway down to lane keep assist, full power, leather and NAV. In other words, the lock, stock and barrel, a phrase meaning buying the entire gun, the whole enchilada with nothing left off the option plate.

Honda's new body strongly resembles the new Civic, the same window line, similar tail and head light shapes. The flanks are different but some will have trouble differentiating the two different models.

Honda get a bigger wheelbase, riding on a 111-inch wheelbase (interestingly the same as a Camry) and while length remains the same at 192 inches. It is a bit wider at 73 inches and it stands 57 inches tall, about an inch shorter. But the inside has grown as the new Accord is half a cubic foot shy of being classified as a full-size car. Without a sunroof Accord becomes a full-size car by a couple of cubic feet. It is a roomy ride.

You won't find a V-6 under the hood and no, it's not located in the trunk either. The 278 hp V-6 is no more an option. Now the Honda sports two turbo motors, a 1.5L of 192 hp found in lesser models (and in many Civics) and a 2.0L turbo monster motor found in my tester that is similar to the 306 hp Civic Type R except "only" knocking down 252 hp at 6,500 rpm and a monstrous 273 pounds of twist from 1,500 to 4,000 rpm. That is prodigious as you will see. It sends that power to the front wheels where 61 percent of its weight resides.



Specifications

Price \$24,465 to \$36,695

Engine

1.5L DOHC, 16 valve turbo directed injected inline four cylinder 192 hp @ 5,500 rpm 192 lb.-ft. of torque @ 1,600 rpm – 5,000 rpm

2.0L DOHC, 16 valve turbo directed injected inline four cylinder 252 hp @ 6,500 rpm 273 lb.-ft. of torque @ 1,500-4,000 rpm.

Transmission

CVT 1.5L

10 speed torque converter automatic 2.0L

Configuration

Transverse mounted front engine/front wheel drive

Dimensions

Wheelbase 111.4 inches

Length 192.2 inches

Width 73.3 inches

Height 57.1 inches

Track (f/r) 62.6/63.1 inches

Weight 3,428 pounds

Weight distribution (f/r)

61.2/38.8 percent

Wheels 19-inch alloys
Tires 235/40X19
Passenger volume 102.7 cubic feet
Trunk volume 16.7 cubic feet
Fuel capacity 14.8 gallons
Turning circle 39.4 feet
Steering lock to lock 2.23 turns

Performance

0-60 mph 5.72 seconds
50-70 mph 3.20 seconds
50-70 mph uphill (6-7 percent) 4.02 seconds
Top speed Who cares?
Fuel economy EPA rated 22/32/26 mpg city/highway/combined.
Expect 28 mpg in rural suburban driving and 37 mpg on the highway at legal speeds.

Even with 26 less hp, Accord outperforms its predecessors scampering 0-60 mph in a quick 5.72 seconds. It will run from 50-70 mph in just 3.20 seconds and the same task up a steep (6-7 percent) grade only slows that time to 4.02 seconds. Throttle response is strong and with the 10 speeder there is no turbo lag. Power is right now. This 2.0L mill is exceptionally smooth and quiet.

Full economy is average with EPA numbers of 22/32/26 mpg city/highway/combined. But expect better. My Accord averaged 28.1 mpg for 443 miles of varied driving. On a long 40-mile two-way highway run at 70 mph, the Accord averaged 37.6 mpg with some traffic. Part of the excellent highway mileage is due to an engine that spins just 1,700 rpm at 70 mph. Fuel

tank is a small 14.8 gallons. It should have at least two more gallons of capacity.

Handling initially felt sloppy and loose, very un-Honda like. It has great creds, four-wheel state of the art independent suspension, a wide 63-inch track front and rear, a super quick electric power steering rack that goes lock to lock in just 2.23 turns, and wide 19-inch alloys shod with low profile 235/40 series rubber. But first impressions felt like a 1994 Buick Regal sedan I happened to drive last week. Weight is not an issue at 3,428 pounds (interestingly the base hybrid version weighs less at 3,342 pounds and even the top of the line Touring hybrid weighs exactly the same as the non-hybrid Touring edition. In other words, there is no weight penalty for the Accord hybrid). A base LX Accord with the 1.5L turbo is nearly 300 pounds lighter than the Touring edition.

But here is the deal, my Touring tester is lighter by about 40 pounds from the prior 9th generation and stiffer in torsional rigidity. Honda now has a Two-Mode Driving System and Adaptive Damper System that actually works, big time. Leave it in normal and you get reasonably nimble handling with some body roll and a super smooth ride that most drivers want. However, put it in Sport mode with a button push and the Accord tightens up like the edgy Honda you expect. Ride suffers little while handling sharpens up like a sporting sedan. Turn in is very crisp. The good news is that the Honda edge in handling is still there.

The Active Damper System also besides adjusting shock damping, also works on other components, like steering (it gets real), throttle mapping and the tranny gets sporty as well. Even Active Sound Control enhances engine sounds. It works big-time as the Honda handling I was so familiar with was back and improved, shaper than ever while still giving granny a great Sunday ride including silence from wind, tire and engine noise. Honda has put the new Accord into a noise abatement program and it has definitely worked as it is noticeably

quieter than previous Accords. Thanks Honda.

Accord comes with every safety acronym including Honda Sensing which now recognizes traffic signs. I mentioned lane keep assist and the brakes are large four-wheel discs and they are powerful. Headlights are also fantastic as well as beautiful.

Inside is a soft leather interior with sublime seats up front and new found huge legroom in the rear. Instrumentation however gives the drivers choices that should be automatic in that you can have a fuel computer or an analog tach. In Honda's defense a graphic tach can be displayed in the Heads-up display, but it's not the same. Having the trip computer helps improve your fuel economy and with a ten-speed tranny, the tach is less necessary except for detail types like me.

The sound system is a bit difficult to operate with its touch screen, but in a couple of weeks it should be second nature, HVAC is a piece of cake. Trunk is a huge, almost 17 cubic feet.

Pricing for the well-equipped Accord with the 1.5L, 192 hp four banger, starts at \$24,465 including \$895 for shipping from its Marysville, Ohio, assembly plant. My top of the line Touring stickers for \$36,695 all in. But one might consider it a near luxo ride which it is. Great power, good fuel economy plus very good handling and a ride I prefer when in Sport mode makes the Honda a perennial contender for sales champ and a continual Car and Driver top ten pick (31 times) of all cars for sale under \$60,000.

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.