

Road Beat: Honda Fit Sport, a near perfect ride



The 2018 Honda Fit Sport is economical and sporty. Photos/Larry Weitzman

By Larry Weitzman

When I first tested the Honda Fit almost 10 years ago, I found it to be a fantastic piece of transportation offering incredible utility in a subcompact size, with great ride and handling plus remarkable fuel economy. It was a perfect example of why hybrids don't make economic sense as the Fit returned near hybrid fuel economy with better performance. Oh, all at a price well below \$20 large

In a conversation with Honda product planners I remarked that a bit more performance would make the Fit a perfect car for so many drivers. Now with the new generation which was introduced

in 2014, there is a more performance in an almost identically sized package that still returns hybrid like fuel economy. In a 65-mile trip from South Lake Tahoe to Placerville, the Fit averaged 52 mpg. Overall it returned 43.2 mpg in a 200-mile round trip between Placerville to Carson City.

Since my tester was a six-speed manual transmission, engine speed at 70 mph was a rather high 3,250 rpm and may have hurt highway fuel economy which “only” averaged 42 mpg, which is about 10 percent less than your average hybrid. Incidentally, the EPA fuel economy numbers are 29/36/31 mpg city/highway/combined. My Fit never returned less than 34.5 mpg and that was during my 50 miles of performance testing. If there is a negative, it’s the small 10.6-gallon fuel tank, bigger would be better.

Fit is cute. Its body is sleeker and significantly more interesting than Gen one and two. Its size and dimensions are virtually similar to the previous generations as most every dimension is within an inch or 2 from the prior generations which is a good thing as the trend has been to grow among all classes. Even the Mini Cooper has grown a half a foot or more. Fit Sport’s length is a diminutive 162 inches with a 100-inch wheelbase. Your average compact car is 180-inches long. Width is narrow at 67 inches and it stands five feet tall. Yet total interior volume is 112 cubic feet or that of an average mid-size sedan. How’s that for packaging?



Specifications

Price \$18,300

Engine

1.5L DOHC 16 valve inline
four 130 hp @ 6,600 rpm
114 lbs.-ft. of torque @
4,800 rpm

Transmissions

Six-speed manual
CVT automatic

Configuration

Transverse mounted front
engine/front wheel drive

Dimensions

Wheelbase 99.6 inches
Length 161.8 inches
Width 67.0 inches
Height 60.0 inches
Track (f/r) 58.1/57.7 inches
Weight 2,553 pounds
Weight distribution (f/r)
62/38 percent
Fuel capacity 10.6 gallons
Passenger volume 95.7 cubic
feet
Cargo volume 16.6 cubic feet
Steering lock to lock 2.51
turns
Turning circle 35.07 feet
Wheels 16 x 6.5-inch alloys
Tires 185/55 x 16 H (good
for 130 mph continuous for
24 hours) rated all season
radials

Performance

0-60 mph 7.90 seconds
50-70 mph 4.92 seconds
50-70 mph uphill 7.92

seconds

Top speed easily into triple digits

Fuel economy 29/36/31 mpg city/highway/combined, but expect much better 37 mpg overall and 42 mpg on the highway at legal speeds.

Under the hood is Honda's familiar 1.5L DOHC 16 valve inline four-cylinder engine, but now pumping out 130 hp at 6,600 rpm and 114 pounds of twist 4,600 rpm, an increase of 20 percent over the first gen and 10 percent over the second gen, although the engine size is identical. The performance is now quite sporty with a significant improve as the numbers indicate. Zero to 60 now arrives in 7.90 seconds and a sprint from 50-70 mph happens in 4.92 seconds and the same sprint up a 6-7 percent grade only slows that time by three seconds to 7.92 seconds. Gen two times were 9.59, 6.08 and 12.15 seconds, so you can quantify the Fit's new and really improved performance without any real loss in fuel economy. Kudos to Honda.

While good looking 16-inch alloys are standard in the Sport, the tires are not exactly meaty at 185/55 series rubber, 195 or 205 series would be even more fun. Track is wide at 58 inches and the electric power steering rack is just 2.51 turns lock to lock. Even weight is just 2,553 pounds. Handling is strong with good feedback and tenacious grip. Cornering speeds were remarkably high with a real sports car like feel with crisp turn-in and accurate on and off-center steering.

Honda Fit is a good example of a smooth and quiet small car. The ride is taut but quite compliant as it admirably absorbs bumps.

Safety has all the basic acronyms including ABS, EBD and VSA (stability assist traction control). It also had an excellent

rear back-up camera and display. But there is no blind spot detection or lane keep assist. No big deal. Headlights are halogens and are excellent in low and high beam. Front ventilated disc brakes are very strong.

Inside is an upgraded interior with comfortable manual seats, a huge rear seat with monstrous legroom and a lift back cargo bay with over 52 cubes of cargo volume that could hit your wallet hard at a Home Depot or Lowes, making the hit on your wallet at a gas station feel like a McDonald's value menu.

Instrumentation is complete with a big speedo flanked by a smaller tach (larger would be better as this engine is very quick revving) on the left and ancillary gauges and info/trip computer screen on the right. On top of the center stack is a screen with a detailed fuel economy page that is fun to use with more detailed info and a fuel econ history page. Its standard sound system is easy to use and sounds great.

Now to the best part, the price of admission. My Sport stickers for a "miniscule" \$17,500. Add about a grand for a CVT auto cog-swapper. Shipping from its assembly plant in Mexico adds \$890. This car is a bargain at a few bucks over \$18,000. Why spend thousands more for a hybrid. You get less performance and only slightly better fuel economy without the substantially more utility? This Fit is fantastic.

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.