

Edmunds picks top fuel-sipping SUVs

December 18 2019, by Ryan Zummallen Of Edmunds



This undated photo provided by Toyota shows the 2021 Toyota RAV4 Prime, a compact SUV that can drive about 39 miles on electricity alone and then switch to a gas engine that averages about 40 mpg. (Maground GmbH/Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A., Inc. via AP)

Hybrids have evolved in recent years, moving on from the original Toyota Prius to a new crop of efficient crossover SUVs. These larger

utility-focused vehicles combine green technology with the space and capability that today's buyers want. The resulting fuel economy can be eye-opening as well, with 40 mpg or more becoming commonplace.

Here are five vehicles that Edmunds has identified as ideal choices for the eco-minded utility buyer. Some are already on dealer lots, while others will make their debut in the first half of 2020. The list is organized in alphabetical brand order.

2020 FORD ESCAPE HYBRID

Starting MSRP: \$29,450 (includes destination fee)

EPA [fuel economy](#): 41 mpg combined

The Ford Escape was the first hybrid SUV to be sold in the U.S., and now Ford is back with an all-new Escape Hybrid. As with the regular 2020 Escape, the hybrid benefits from a roomier interior, new styling and improved safety features. It's also considerably more fuel-efficient than the previous-generation Escape Hybrid, which was last sold for the 2012 model year.

Other highlights include sporty handling and an EV driving mode that keeps the vehicle in electric-only driving as long as the battery lasts. We noticed the hybrid is a bit noisier than the regular Escape, but it's a small trade-off for the improved efficiency. There is also a plug-in version with 30 miles of electric range coming soon.



This undated photo provided by Subaru shows the 2020 Subaru Crosstrek Hybrid, a compact SUV that can drive about 17 miles on electricity alone and then switch to a gas engine that averages about 35 mpg. (Subaru of America, Inc. via AP)

2020 HONDA CR-V HYBRID

Estimated starting MSRP: \$28,000

Estimated fuel economy: 40 mpg combined

Honda is bringing a hybrid version of its popular CR-V to the market for 2020. This move is significant because it could turn out to be an even more appealing vehicle than the standard CR-V, which is already

Edmunds' top-rated small crossover SUV. Honda says the hybrid will get 50% better fuel economy than the standard CR-V.

We expect the hybrid will maintain the CR-V's impressive blend of performance, practicality and value. We're slightly disappointed that Honda has elected to give the hybrid the CR-V's regular infotainment system, which can be distracting to use, but that's likely to be this vehicle's only drawback.

2020 SUBARU CROSSTREK HYBRID

Starting MSRP: \$36,155 (includes destination fee)

EPA fuel economy: electric range of 17 miles; 35 mpg combined



This undated photo provided by Honda shows the 2020 Honda CR-V hybrid, a compact SUV that's expected to get 50% better fuel economy than the standard CR-V. (Courtesy of American Honda Motor Co., Inc. via AP)

Subaru's attempt at a true no-compromise SUV is the Crosstrek Hybrid. As a plug-in hybrid, it has a bigger battery pack that can provide a small amount of all-electric driving. You can also recharge the battery pack at home or at a public charging station. Regularly doing so can greatly reduce your fuel consumption.

As with the regular Crosstrek, the hybrid has standard all-wheel drive and an impressive 8.7 inches of ground clearance. The combination gives the Crosstrek above-average off-road ability. Compared to the regular Crosstrek, however, the hybrid has a smaller cargo area. It's also significantly more expensive, although available rebates and tax incentives help defray the cost.

2021 TOYOTA RAV4 PRIME PHEV

Estimated starting MSRP: \$36,500

Estimated fuel economy: electric range of 39 miles; 40 mpg combined

Plug-in hybrids have been slow to catch on with mainstream buyers. That could change with the Toyota RAV4 Prime. The Prime starts out as a RAV4 Hybrid, which is popular with RAV4 buyers as well as Edmunds' experts. Now Toyota is adding the same technology in its Prius Prime plug-in to make the RAV4 Prime both greener and faster.



This undated photo provided by Ford shows the 2020 Ford Escape Hybrid, a compact SUV with an EPA-estimated 41 mpg in mixed driving. (David Westphal/Ford Motor Company via AP)

Toyota says you'll be able to drive the Prime up to 39 miles on all-electric power, which is an above-average distance for a plug-in. Still not sold? Toyota also says the Prime will have 302 horsepower and will be the second-quickest vehicle in the brand's lineup behind the Supra sports car. We don't expect the Prime will be suited for off-road trails, but that won't be a concern for most buyers.

2020 VOLVO XC60 PHEV

Starting MSRP: \$55,590 (includes destination fee)



This undated photo provided by Volvo shows the 2020 Volvo XC60 T8, a small luxury SUV that can drive about 20 miles on electricity alone and then switch to a gas engine that averages about 27 mpg. (Volvo Cars of North America, LLC via AP)

EPA fuel economy: electric range of 20 miles; 27 mpg combined

Green SUVs come in luxury guise these days too, as evidenced by the Volvo XC60 T8, a plug-in hybrid version of this small luxury SUV. The T8 provides 400 horsepower in addition to its 20 miles of all-electric range. All of the regular XC60's appealing traits are here as well, including an elegant and spacious interior and many standard safety features.

There are a few minor drivability issues. Specifically, the T8's grabby brake pedal can make it hard to stop smoothly, and it isn't as nimble in overall handling as the regular XC60. But overall, this is still one of the best ways to get both high fuel economy and luxury trappings.

EDMUNDS SAYS: Identify the right-size vehicle for your daily use and consider your ability to charge a plug-in or electric vehicle properly. Knowing your exact needs will make green SUV shopping a breeze.

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