

Edmunds compares 2020 Honda CR-V and Toyota RAV4 hybrids

7 October 2020, by Kurt Niebuhr Of Edmunds



This Feb. 13, 2020 photo shows a 2020 Toyota RAV4 Hybrid on display at the 2020 Pittsburgh International Auto Show in Pittsburgh. The Toyota RAV4 Hybrid and Honda CR-V Hybrid are similar in fuel economy, power and practicality according to Edmunds. Each is a smart buy for a fuel-efficient SUV. (AP Photo/Gene J. Puskar, File)

The Toyota RAV4 Hybrid is the brand's best-selling hybrid, with 2019 sales outpacing even those of the Prius. It provides significantly higher fuel economy — an estimated 40 mpg combined — than the regular RAV4 SUV with minimal compromise.

There is a new alternative for shoppers to consider, however: the Honda CR-V Hybrid. The 2020 model year is the first time Honda has offered a hybrid version of its top-selling SUV. The regular CR-V also happens to be Edmunds' top-rated nonhybrid SUV, considerably outranking the regular RAV4.

Is the CR-V's all-around goodness enough to overcome Toyota's hybrid expertise? Edmunds' team of expert reviewers compare the 2020 Honda CR-V Hybrid and 2020 Toyota RAV4 Hybrid to determine a winner.

PRICE AND FUEL ECONOMY

Toyota and Honda ask for a modest premium, just under \$3,000, for the hybrid versions of their popular SUVs. Starting at \$29,870, including destination, the CR-V Hybrid runs neck and neck with the RAV4 Hybrid, which starts at \$29,675. Pricing is similar even when you look at a fully loaded model. Both of these hybrid SUVs come standard with all-wheel drive.

The EPA estimates that the CR-V Hybrid will get 38 mpg in combined driving. But in our real-world testing evaluation, we had difficulty replicating the EPA number. Our test CR-V Hybrid ended up getting 32 mpg overall. In contrast, we found it easier to get close to the RAV4 Hybrid's EPA estimate of 40 mpg combined. Our test RAV4 Hybrid posted 36 mpg.

Winner: RAV4 Hybrid

INTERIOR ACCOMMODATIONS

The RAV4 Hybrid and CR-V Hybrid offer spacious interiors with ample room for both front and rear seat passengers. Both are easy to get in and out of and offer good visibility thanks to their elevated driving positions.

These small SUVs also boast tons of practicality. But the Toyota offers greater cargo capacity — 37.6 cubic feet compared to the CR-V Hybrid's 33.2 cubic feet — as well as rear seats that are easier to raise and lower.

Toyota has placed numerous bins and shelves inside the cabin for storage of small items. But the CR-V's options are generally more versatile and clever. Should car seat installation be a daily occurrence, Honda's slightly more generous rear seat legroom makes loading and unloading your precious cargo a little easier.

Winner: tie



This photo provided by Honda shows the 2020 Honda CR-V Hybrid. The Honda CR-V Hybrid and Toyota RAV4 Hybrid are similar in fuel economy, power and practicality according to Edmunds. Each is a smart buy for a fuel-efficient SUV. (Wes Allison/Honda via AP)

COMFORT AND REFINEMENT

The Honda CR-V Hybrid's front seats are more comfortable than the Toyota's. In both vehicles, rear passengers get ample legroom but will likely prefer the higher seating position in the CR-V Hybrid.

Honda also does a slightly better job of making the CR-V's interior materials look and feel more upscale. The CR-V Hybrid also offers excellent isolation from road imperfections and engine vibrations, adding to a more luxurious driving experience. The RAV4's engine can sound exceedingly coarse under acceleration.

Winner: CR-V Hybrid

INFOTAINMENT AND DRIVING AIDS

The RAV4 Hybrid and CR-V Hybrid offer fairly comprehensive suites of driver aids. Features such as adaptive cruise control, lane keeping assist and automatic emergency braking are standard. As for operation of these systems, we've found the

Honda's to be a little more prone to unnecessary or annoying alerts.

Infotainment offerings are broadly similar, though the design of each vehicle's infotainment interface leaves something to be desired. Honda's system looks dated, and its virtual buttons can be tough to press and slow to respond. The Toyota system's dated graphics don't do it any favors either, but its easier-to-press buttons and availability of Apple CarPlay and Android Auto smartphone integration on every RAV4 Hybrid tip the scales.

Winner: RAV4 Hybrid

DRIVING PERFORMANCE

Straight-line performance isn't usually at the top of a hybrid buyer's list, but having enough power to merge onto the freeway or pass on a two-lane road is still important. The RAV4 Hybrid feels quicker than the CR-V Hybrid when you mash the gas. In Edmunds testing, it was about a second quicker in getting to 60 mph.

The CR-V Hybrid does beat the RAV4 Hybrid when it comes to handling and braking performance and feel. The Honda offers confidence-inspiring handling and smooth, powerful brakes. The CR-V Hybrid also provides a smoother transition from electric to combustion engine propulsion.

Winner: CR-V Hybrid

EDMUNDS SAYS: The 2020 Honda CR-V Hybrid and 2020 Toyota RAV4 Hybrid are both smart buys that justify their slightly higher costs compared to the conventional models. They are closely matched, and your decision could come down to personal taste. But in the end Edmunds recommends the CR-V Hybrid. Though it's not as efficient as the RAV4 Hybrid, its superior mix of refinement, practicality and comfort makes it more enjoyable to drive every day.

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