

Road Beat: Honda CR-V continues SUV dominance



Plenty of reasons why the 2017 Honda CR-V Touring is the bestselling SUV. Photos/Larry Weitzman

By Larry Weitzman

Honda has some great selling cars, the new Civic, which now outsells every other compact and the new CR-V which is also the best-selling compact CUV. In the past year, Honda has introduced a bunch of new rides and they are all fantastic.

The new Civic blew me away with performance, handling, phenomenal fuel economy and fabulous looks. Now the CR-V is in the spotlight. And it almost duplicates its Civic's attributes (CR-V means Civic Recreational Vehicle). While the new Civic has an awesome design, the new CR-V while clearly the best-looking CR-V ever, still needs some work to its new body. Such

as lightening the front end and more aggression. But when compared to the first, second and third generations it's light years ahead. The prior fourth generation was a big improvement and this new fifth generation is another big step in the right direction.

The biggest improvement is in the window line. No longer does it look like a bridge arch. That is the extent of any negative. The new high compression (10.3:1), 1.5L DOHC 16 valve, turbocharged direct injected four is a pure gem. With 18.5 pounds of boost pressure this new mini-mighty knocks out 190 hp at a low 5,600 rpm while generating 179 pounds of twist anywhere from 2,000 to 5,000 rpm meaning it pulls like a freight train from off-idle to near peak hp, especially with the new CVT tranny that drives and feels like it is actually shifting. Best CVT in the business. Turbocharging also means no loss of performance at high altitudes as in the mountains.

Size wise, the CR-V is the perfect compact CUV at 181 inches in length plus a generous width of 73 inches while standing 67 inches tall. It rides on a 105-inch wheelbase which is average for this class.

Performance is outstanding considering its diminutive 1.5L inline four. Ah, but the miracle of turbo charging takes what would normally be an engine of about 120 hp and perhaps 100 pounds of twist at 4,500 rpm to the huge numbers above by using the exhaust gases to spin up a turbo to a maximum boost of 18.5 PSI. That's a big number. But it works well pushing this 3,500 pound CUV to 60 mph in a quick average of 7.82 seconds. It also runs a 50-70 mph simulated pass in just 4.19 seconds and the same run up a steep grade (6-7 percent) in 6.29 seconds. It does have some turbo lag (most drivers won't notice) and the reality is that it feels quicker than the actual numbers and once on boost the CR-V feels quite responsive.

The benefit of the small turbo engine is improved fuel

economy. EPA rates this CR-V at 27/33/29 mpg city/highway/combined. During my 460 miles of varied driving with almost no time on a four-lane highway, the CR-V averaged 29.3 mpg. On the highway at 70 mph in a two-way run it averaged 34.8 mpg. A two-way run from Placerville to Carson City averaged 29.2 mpg. Those are better than average numbers for this class and great numbers considering the CR-V's performance numbers.

Handling is excellent because of its great engineering. Steering is an extremely quick 2.3 turns lock to lock. Track is a wide 63 inches. Tires are 235/60 series surrounding 18X7 inch alloys. I have seen better looking alloys (oops, another negative). Suspension is a state of the art trick independent set up with MacPherson struts up front and a double wishbone system holding up the rear with stab bars at both ends. And does it corner. Steering is nicely weighted, grip is excellent while when pushed hard the attitude remains reasonable flat. It is a delight when the road bends when doing the fast tango in the twisties. The new CR-V even made the front cover of Consumer Reports April, 2017 annual auto issue. Honda has also given the CR-V good weight distribution with the AWD model at 57/43 percent front and rear. Except for a small photo of a Mazda MX-5, in the upper right hand corner, it was the only vehicle, front and centered on the cover.



Specifications

Price \$24,945 to \$34,595

Engine

2.4L DOHC, 16 valve, direct
injected inline four 184 hp
@ 6,400 rpm

180 lbs.-ft. of torque at
3,900 rpm

1.5L turbocharged, DOHC, 16
valve, direct injected
inline four 190 hp @ 5,600
rpm

179 lbs.-ft. of torque @
2,000-5,000 rpm

Transmission

CVT

Configuration

Transverse front
engine/FWD/AWD

Dimensions

Wheelbase 104.7 inches

Length 180.6 inches

Width 73.0 inches

Height 66.5 inches

Track f/r AWD 62.9/63.5
inches

Ground clearance 8.2 inches

Weight 3,512 pounds

Weight distribution f/r
57/43 percent

Tow Capacity 1,500 pounds

Wheels 18X7 inch alloys

Tires 235/60X18

Steering lock to lock 2.30
turns

Turning circle 37.4 feet

Cargo volume seats up/down
39.2/75.6 cubic feet

Total volume 142.1 cubic
feet

Performance

0-60 mph 7.82 seconds

50-70 mph 4.19 seconds

50-70 mph up a steep grade
6.29 seconds

Top speed Who cares but well
into triple digits

Fuel economy EPA rated at
27/33/29 mpg

city/highway/combined.

Expect 29 mpg in rural
suburban driving and 34 mpg
on a level highway at legal
speeds.

New found fuel economy is one of the reasons CR put the new CR-V on the cover and why vehicles in the compact CUV (SUV) class have become the new practical family vehicle. This CR-V as reported above has class leading fuel economy numbers of 27/33/29 mpg. Where the average mid-size car has a 100 cubic feet of passenger volume and perhaps a 12-cubic foot trunk, this foot shorter CUY has a passenger volume of 103 c/f with a cargo capacity of an additional 39 c/f and about 76 c/f with the rear seats folded down.

And it still rides with that mid-size quality of extreme smoothness and quiet. There is little head tossing. Quiet is promoted with its low rpms at 70 mph of 2,000. And the body is vault tight.

Since there is no second place with respect to safety, my CR-V top of the line Touring had every safety feature, never mind the usual acronyms. Standard in the EX, EX-L and touring are advanced features such as Forward Collision Warning, Land Departure Warning, Collision Mitigation Braking, Road Departure Mitigation, Lane Keeping Assist, Adaptive Cruise Control, Auto High-Beam Headlights and Blind Spot Information

along with Cross Traffic Monitor. Headlights are also terrific.

Inside is a comfortable leather interior with soft touch materials everywhere. Instrumentation is complete and clear with a trick trip computer and three different mileage computers and readouts. A weakness is the touch screen to control the radio and HVAC. Simple push buttons and knobs are more accurate and easier to use. I have commented on this issue before.

Seating is very comfortable and multi-adjustable. It is suitable for all day travel and rear seating is good for three. Cargo space is a winner for Home Depot and Lowe's shopping. I easily put two 4 x 4 wooden pallets in the rear cargo area. Could have added three times that amount.

Honda has a great way to price their models in four trim levels of options with the top three models getting all the safety equipment mentioned above and from the EX model and above the same 1.5L turbo powerhouse instead of the LX model's 2.4L normally aspirated unit is rated at 184 hp and 180 pounds of twist. The turbo engine has almost identical peak power numbers in an engine of 60 percent the size and it achieves better performance with an almost 10 percent boost in fuel economy. But with turbocharging there is no loss of performance as the elevation climbs. It's perfect for the Sierra or the Rockies.

Pricing for the Touring model AWD begins and ends at \$33,695, plus \$900 for the train/truck from Alliston, Ontario, Canada. There are no factory options, it already has everything. An LX FWD starts at \$24,945 and AWD will add \$1,300 to all FWD models. Drive one and you will understand with this CUV is dominating sales.

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.