

Aspirational

by Joe Sage

It would seem the Honda stylists and designers put their lockdown time to great use, as they emerge with an all-new look for the HR-V, said to be signaling a direction for their other SUVs and trucks. It's a less trim or buttoned-down look, more gnarly and powerful, and it works really well.

Responding to extensive input from its customer base—who wanted a lot, but, as with the first-

gen HR-V, didn't want to pay a lot—Honda has brought us a whole new generation-two HR-V. The vehicle's philosophy and character are stated to have moved from "entry level" to "aspirational," as is immediately noticeable in its larger size and lower, wider stance, as well as that bold new styling. Visibility is improved with door-mounted side mirrors, which also add to its longer, stronger look.

The cabin bears healthy specs for its category, from legroom and headroom (with rear legroom unusually generous) to cargo capacity. Instrumenta-

tion and interface are all new. Ours is the top trim of four, EX-L, with all-wheel drive to boot, so it already satisfies all aspirations within its immediate family, including an interior in rich black or grey perforated leather, with 8-way power driver's seat.

It does still leave room to aspire in general, as it lacks a few smaller niceties such as reverse-dip mirrors, seat memory or adjustable lumbar, though seat frames and cushions have been completely reengineered for improved comfort and support.

This HR-V is built on a new platform combining the best elements of Honda crossovers and sedans, with steering, front suspension structure and rear shocks derived from Civic, brakes and rear suspension structure from the larger CR-V, and 50 percent of the platform all new for HR-V.

Power is in line with the segment and price, which can be a study in relativity—we came into the HR-V from a more powerful vehicle and noticed

Some people may be emotionally scarred by such a take, but we found the 3D nose on the new HR-V reminding us a little of a classic Shelby Cobra. Perhaps with a set of stripes and some new tires...

the difference. After a few days, however, we were commenting anew that it is plenty potent around town, on the open road, on highway climbs, and—especially given its ample ground clearance—for mild off-pavement activity on the weekends.

There are no off-road drive modes, though there is a snow mode (along with normal and eco), plus hill descent control. The transmission does have Drive or Sport (and Low) options, enabling you to, say, drive in Sport but in eco mode, if so inclined, much like having a personal profile at your fingertips without a deep screen dive (though that is also at hand). There is no plus-minus manual nor paddles, though power is smooth, and these weren't missed. We did notice the sound and feel of its CVT at times, an element unnoticed by many or disliked by some. Suspension provides great, solid handling, though you will feel rough surfaces.



Honda is famous for its prices being complete as stated and the sticker price matching with no haggles. Our only add-on was custom paint (just \$395), a rich Nordic Forest Pearl that displayed a definite greenish tint in bright sunlight, changing to very grey in overcast conditions, both attractive. Combining form and function, the new Honda HR-V is a satisfying machine for a great price. And if it still leaves you aspirational, as intended, well, there's plenty more in the Honda lineup. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

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|----------------------------|---|
| ASSEMBLY |Celaya, Guanajuato, Mexico |
| ENGINE / TRANSMISSION |USA / Mexico |
| PARTS CONTENT |40% Mexico / 30% US/Canada |
| ENGINE |2.0L 16v DOHC i-VTEC inline-4 |
| HP/TORQUE |158 hp / 138 lb-ft |
| COMPRESSION RATIO |10.8:1 |
| TRANSMISSION |CVT |
| DRIVETRAIN |AWD (FWD also avail) |
| SUSPENSION |F: MacPherson strut, 27x4.5mm tubular stblzr bar; R: multi-link, 17.2x13m solid stblzr bar |
| STEERING |elec pwr asst rack & pinion |
| BRAKES |F: 12.3 vented; R: 12.2 solid disc |
| WHEELS |17-in Shark Gray alloys, machine finish |
| TIRES |215/60R17 all-season |
| LENGTH / WHEELBASE |179.8 / 104.5 in |
| GROUND CLEARANCE |7.0 in |
| APPRCH / DEPART |15.5 / 20.5° |
| TURNING CIRCLE |35.1 ft |
| HEADROOM (F/R) |38.4 / 38.0 in |
| LEGROOM (F/R) |41.9 / 37.7 in |
| CARGO CAPACITY |24.4/ 55.1 cu.ft |
| WEIGHT |3333 lb |
| FUEL / CAPACITY |reg unl / 14.0 gal |
| MPG |25/30/27 (city/hwy/comb) |
| BASE PRICE |\$28,950 |
| PAINT: Nordic Forest Pearl |395 |
| DESTINATION CHARGE |1245 |

2023 HONDA HR-V LINEUP

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| LX | FWD |\$23,650 |
| | AWD |25,150 |
| Sport | FWD |25,650 |
| | AWD |27,150 |
| EX-L | FWD |27,450 |
| | AWD |▼ 28,950 |