

# Honda HR-V

**Featured model: 1.6 VTEC 5-door**



**B**ULL-NOSED, BUG-EYED AND bristling with brash looks, the HR-V (High-Rider Vehicle, Honda Recreational Vehicle, call it what you will) is Honda's youth-targeted runner in the rapidly growing leisure-oriented "lifestyle" vehicle sector.

Once the sole preserve of surfboard-toting Suzuki Vitaras, the Sport Utility Vehicle (SUV) camp has positively mushroomed since Toyota's cheeky little RAV4 splashed on to the scene in 1994.

Its ranks arguably now include such diverse runners as the Land Rover Freelander, Renault's mud-plugging Scenic RX4 and off-roadable 4x4 estates like the Volvo V70 Cross Country and Audi's A6-based Allroad.

The "occasional off-roader" sector is also moving upmarket to bring us brawny brown-laners such as the Mercedes-Benz M-Class and BMW X5. And there are plenty more candidates queuing up just over the horizon.

To help fend off some of this growing rivalry, Honda supplemented the original three-door-only HR-V earlier this year, adding a more family-friendly five-door version as well as a more powerful, variable valve timing (VTEC) variant of the 1.6-litre engine.

The five-door doesn't just gain much easier access via the extra pair of doors, though. The 10cm stretch slots within the wheelbase, with all the extra room given over to back seat space – solving at a stroke the original three-door's "cosy" rear accommodation.

Greatly benefiting the five-door's

increased size and weight, the VTEC power unit isn't anything like as "top-endy" as its figures suggest, proving admirably flexible (albeit lacking great gusto) lower down the range. Being a VTEC, though, it's happiest spinning to its 7000rpm red line limit.

Short, closely stacked gearing only adds to its racy behaviour, but comes at the expense of busy-sounding motorway cruising, and does (still respectable) fuel economy few favours.

The HR-V possesses a solid, all-of-a-piece feel, tackling bumps and bends in a reassuring, semi-sporting manner that largely belies its practical, high-riding stance, while the stiffer yet more mature five-door quells the three door's fidgety firmness over broken surfaces.

The HR-V doesn't set out to beat dedicated mud-pluggers at their own game. But it's reassuring to know that its "grass-and-gravel"-drive is on-tap when needed, without incurring the penalties of *permanent* four-wheel drive all the time.

## VERDICT

**Two more doors and a mini-limousine stretch add family car convenience and practicality to the HR-V, without diluting the three-door's chirpy looks and jaunty demeanour. Honda's "high-rider" is a trendy yet value-conscious alternative to its bigger (but costlier) co-runner, the CR-V, as well as squaring up to more dedicated dirt-bashers and off-roadable MPVs, such as the pioneering Scenic RX4.**

## AT A GLANCE

*considering size, price and rivals*

<b>Overtaking ability</b>	☆☆☆☆○
<b>Space/practicality</b>	☆☆☆☆○
<b>Controls/displays</b>	☆☆☆☆○
<b>Safety</b>	☆☆○○○
<b>Handling/steering</b>	☆☆☆☆○
<b>Comfort</b>	☆☆☆☆○
<b>Fuel economy</b>	☆☆☆☆○

## SPECIFICATION

**engine** 1590cc, 4 cylinder, petrol; 122bhp at 6600rpm, 106 lb ft at 4900rpm; belt-driven SOHC, 16 valves, variable valve timing  
**transmission** 5-speed manual, "on demand" 4-wheel drive; 18.6mph/1000rpm in 5th, 15.2 in 4th  
**suspension** front: independent damper/struts, coil springs, anti-roll bar. Rear: beam axle, trailing arms and Panhard rod, coil springs, anti-roll bar  
**steering** hydraulic power assisted; 2.75 turns lock-to-lock; 11.1m diameter turning circle between kerbs (15.0m for one turn of the wheel)  
**brakes** ventilated discs front, drums rear with standard ABS and EBD  
**wheels/tyres** 6in alloy (x4) with 205/60R16 92H tyres (Yokohama ASPEC A348 on test car); temporary-use (steel) spare wheel

## LIKES ...

cabin height makes for easy step in/out 4WD on tap yet only used when needed mirrors fold electrically for tight squeezes 5-door's extra space and practicality

## and GRIPES

no clutch footrest or seat-height adjuster no centre rear seatbelt, even as an option getting dripped on when tailgate raised small fiddly radio controls (but CD included)

## THE HR-V RANGE

**body** 3- and 5-door Sport Utility Vehicle  
**trim levels** single specification level, common to both engines; dealer fit options  
**engines** petrol: 1.6/103bhp and 1.6/122bhp VTEC; no diesel  
**drive** 5-speed manual; 2WD or "on demand" 4WD. CVT automatic option on 3- and 5-door (1.6/103bhp 4WD only)

OVERTAKING ABILITY <span style="float:right">★☆☆○○</span>					
<i>Torque peaks at a lofty 4900rpm but VTEC feels less "top-endy" than this suggests. Needs ample gearstick stirring to feel (and sound) its best, but still affably brisk without it. VTEC engine advisable for 5-door</i>					
acceleration in seconds	through gears*	③ <sup>th</sup> gear	④ <sup>th</sup> gear	⑤ <sup>th</sup> gear	
20-40mph	3.3	6.8	9.0	12.4	
30-50mph	4.1	6.8	9.0	12.3	
40-60mph	5.2	7.3	9.8	13.1	
50-70mph	7.1	7.8	11.3	16.1	
<b>30-70mph</b>	<b>11.2</b>	<b>14.6</b>	<b>20.3</b>	<b>28.4</b>	
max speed in each gear (*using 6850rpm for best acceleration)					
gear	①*	②*	③*	④	⑤
speed (mph)	32	57	83	105	104

SPACE AND PRACTICALITY <span style="float:right">★★★☆☆</span>				
<i>Outshone by MPVs for sheer space, lifestyle features and versatility, but lofty cabin, 4WD and 5-door's enhanced usability still hold plenty of appeal. High load deck hinders luggage height and ease of loading</i>				
<i>in centimetres (5-door SUV)</i>				
<b>outside</b>		<b>inside</b>	( <sup>†</sup> without sunroof)	
length	411 (401)	front - legroom	85-107	
width - inc mirrors	200	- headroom	99 †	
- mirrors folded	176	rear - typical leg/	103 (97)	
height (inc roof spoiler)	167	kneeroom	78 (66)	
load sill height	0/77	- headroom	94	
(inside/outside)		- hiproom	119 (122)	
<b>steering</b>		<b>load space</b>	(all seats in use)	
turns lock-to-lock	2.75	(litres/cu ft)	290/10.2	
turning circle (metres)	11.1	load length	63(67) - 150(138)	
easy to park/garage?		full length to fascia	235	
		load width	101-135	
		load height (under shelf)	39(37)	
		(to top of aperture)	71	

CONTROLS AND DISPLAYS <span style="float:right">★★★★☆</span>	
<i>Blue-faced dials (and seats) may not suit all tastes; otherwise, Honda's "Joy Machine" sports light, fluid steering and controls, fumble-free switchgear and a generous assortment of cubbyholes</i>	
	

SAFETY <span style="float:right">★★☆☆○</span>	
<i>Safety kit includes ABS with EBD, two frontal airbags, front seatbelt pretensioners, plus a 'Blackpool Illuminations' high-level brake light; but no centre seatbelt in the rear - not even a lap belt on the options list</i>	
<b>braking</b>	<b>dry road stopping distance</b>
pedal feel <span style="float:right">★★★☆☆</span>	<i>from 50mph (with standard ABS)</i>
in emergency <span style="float:right">★★★☆☆</span>	pedal load   distance
handbrake <span style="float:right">★★★☆☆</span>	10kg   39½
	16kg   <b>25½ best stop</b>
	+4kg ie 20kg   27½m

EURO NCAP CRASH TEST RATINGS
HR-V not yet tested

SECURITY FEATURES		
central locking	✓	alarm 0
remote control	✓	immobiliser ✓
auto window closure	✗	luggage security <span style="float:right">★★☆☆○</span>
deadlocks	✗	
✓ standard	0 dealer option	✗ not available

HANDLING AND STEERING <span style="float:right">★★★☆☆</span>	
<i>Rocks and rolls more than a normal saloon but Honda's cheeky, lifestyle SUV proves more fun-loving and agile on the road than more dedicated dirt-bashers. Steering is light and responsive but lacks feel</i>	
	

COMFORT <span style="float:right">★★★★☆</span>
<i>Extra doors plus a 10cm stretch boost back seat space and ease of entry, giving the high-riding Honda a more composed ride, too. Still a touch turbulent, though, while low gearing mars cruising refinement</i>

FUEL ECONOMY <span style="float:right">★★★☆☆</span>	
<i>Variable valve timing and Honda's clever "on-demand" 4WD pay off at the fuel pumps, netting respectable 30-plus mpg economy. Range a bit below par, but a good filler and low-fuel lamp doesn't cry wolf</i>	
<b>AA test results (mpg)</b>	<b>official figures (mpg)</b>
worst (hard/urban) 22	urban 27.2
best (gentle/rural) 44	extra urban 37.2
<b>overall mpg on test 30</b>	<b>combined 32.8</b>
realistic tank capacity 51 litres	CO <sub>2</sub> emissions 205g/km
typical range 335 miles	car tax band <b>D</b>

HOW THE HONDA HR-V COMPARES	engine cap/power (cyl/cc/bhp)	revs at 70mph (rpm)	30-70mph through gears (sec)	30-70mph in 5th/4th gears (sec)	fuel economy (mpg)	brakes - best stop from 50mph (m/kg)	maximum legroom - front (cm)	typical leg/ kneeroom - rear (cm)	steering - turns/ circle (m)	overall length (cm)
HONDA HR-V 1.6i VTEC 4x4 5DR	4/1590/122	3760	11.2	28.4/20.3	30	25½/16 †	107	103/78	2.75/11.1	411
Daihatsu Grand Move 1.6 5dr	4/1590/90	3375	10.8	28.1/20	35	28/16	103	109/75	3.7/9.5	410
Fiat Multipla 1.6 5dr (6-seater)	4/1581/103	3780	12.7	29.2/20.6	29	27½/20 †	106	114/83	2.8/11.1	399
Honda CR-V 2.0i 5dr 4x4	4/1973/126	3440	11.2	29.4/17.5	27	29½/16 †	107	110/74	3.2/11.1	452
Renault Scenic 2.0 5dr	4/1998/140	3120	9.7	26.9/17.6	30	24/50 †	106	102/76	3.5/10.6	413
Toyota RAV4 2.0 NRG 3dr 4x4	4/1998/147	3350	9.0	23.4/16.0	30	26/16 †	110	98/73	3.0/10.3	387

† with ABS