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Wheels: Honda Re-imagines the Classic Civic's Sleek Form

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This Honda's compact size and reliable gas mileage combine with speed controls to make a good urban vehicle.

Editor's note: Wheels is a section featuring car reviews.

There are two diesel engines available on the new Honda Civic: the 2.2 and the 1.6.

I cannot speak for the former, but the latter is so economical that I can cover 300 miles on barely a quarter of a tank.

Honda claims that its 1.6-liter iDTEC will return 33.2 kilometers per liter; I experience about 21.59 kilometers per liter, encompassing all manner of driving, from stopping and starting in the slowest of traffic jams to fast and demanding highway cruising.

Facts at a Glance

Honda Civic

New price range:
835,956 — 1,391,046
rubles
Technical
Specifications:
0-100 kph: 10.2
seconds
Top speed: 207 kph
Economy: 33.2 kpl

Source: Honda

This latest example, the ninth generation of the Civic, builds on the futuristic theme and enhances the parts that the original hinted at but did not carry off as well, such as its rear, which features bulbous lights, while the triangular exhausts have disappeared.

I thought I would miss these, but the whole package is more aesthetically pleasing. The concealed handles for the rear doors make this five-door seem like a three, especially to my wife when she first tried to get our children in the back. It is a nice touch and one that seems to have been copied by other manufacturers. The rear windscreen is still an annoyance for me because of the position of the spoiler, which effectively cuts the screen in two and hinders vision when inside. But it is a great driver's car with body-hugging "magic" seats.

My family and I demanded much from our striking red protege because we went away for a long weekend. While it is not large enough for our tandem stroller, it copes with a suitcase, my daughter's Trunki, a single stroller, a crib and a box of food as well as my daughters in their two car seats. Despite being weighed down, the driving experience is good. The economy figures I mentioned earlier are reached with a combination of automatic engine stop/start and the use of a green economy button to the right of the steering wheel. While engaged, progress is noticeably a little lethargic on occasions and disengaging this does speed up the process. But once the Civic is on its way, progress is satisfying, and with the correct gears there is an element of gusto. The gearbox is a little notchy, but it can be forgiven this for its decisiveness.

The Civic is a tricky car to reverse, and on occasions it can be difficult to gauge whether there are any obstructions behind, so it is helpful that some models are fitted with reversing sensors. Unfortunately this model does not have them.

Equipped with all the usual refinement, the air conditioning is an absolute blessing during the height of our British summer where temperatures exceed 25 degrees Celsius. It is true. So the low setting keeps us all extremely happy.

I find cruise control a little complicated to operate, tending to engage the speed limiter function instead, but this is not a bad thing, especially when driving through unfamiliar territory in Surrey where motorists are warned of speed cameras in 48 kilometer per hour zones. I always find it difficult to stick to 48 kilometers per hour, especially when driving an unfamiliar car. This is perhaps too fast for cars in Moscow more used to the crawling pace

of the endless traffic jams. However, when on the open and fast flowing road outside Moscow, the limiter allows the motorist to set the speed and then no matter how much the accelerator is pushed it will not exceed the setting. It does, however, exceed this speed when traveling downhill, but by no more than 4.8 kilometers per hour, and then it rectifies it fairly quickly.

The diesel Civic is so environmentally friendly that it only emits 95 grams of carbon dioxide per kilometer, which results in no road tax.

Honda should do well with this particular version of the Civic if for no other reason than its sheer efficiency, which cash strapped motorists are sure to embrace as they watch continually fluctuating fuel prices.

Watch the video at testdrives.biz.

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