



What exactly is a 'lifestyle' vehicle? Well, the Honda CR-V pretty much sums it up.

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NEW HONDA CR-V 2.2 i-DTEC SE

The Swindon built Sport Utility Vehicle (SUV) is perfectly suited to many motorists' way of life. It behaves and drives like a 'normal' car; it has the space of an estate, as well as 4x4 safety, and enough grunt to tow a trailer, caravan or horsebox.

But what's so different about the 'all-new' CR-V? Not a huge amount actually. I mean, if it ain't broke, don't fix it. Nonetheless, there are a few improvements. And I got to sample these at its UK launch on the roads surrounding Scotland's Loch Lomond.

I discovered the fourth generation CR-V offers even more quality, practicality and refinement than its forerunner. And with environmental concerns of growing importance, the up-to-the-minute 2.0 i-VTEC and 2.2 i-DTEC engines emit significantly less CO2 than before. Also, for the first time in Europe, the latest CR-V is offered with a choice of two and four-wheel drive.

You still get the bigger-than-it-looks interior; with the rear seats up the boot capacity is a spacious 589 litres, and this extends to 1669 litres when the seats are down. But what does this mean in the real world? It means that if you are a parent with a young family, you can chuck

not just one, but multiple folded buggies in - along with a week's worth of shopping. With the seats folded down you are able to load a washing machine in as well.

The new CR-V is available with four trim levels S, SE, SR and EX. I drove the 2.2 i-DTEC SE around the damp, misty, yet beautiful country roads of Dunbartonshire. The model's intelligent multi info display, idle stop, climate control, cruise control and 17-inch alloy wheels made motoring effortless. The fitting of hill start assist was particularly useful considering the undulating environment I was in, and the SE's rain sensing auto wipers and dusk sensing auto lights successfully challenged the obligatory dark, drizzly days that come with Scotland's climate at this time of the year.

The CR-V's 2.2 litre oil burner pulls very nicely and, although its acceleration won't set your pants on fire, it's not sluggish. The SUV feels robust, and in slippery conditions the 4x4 traction gives you a sense of security - something many rural-based parents might well be glad of when taking their youngsters to country schools. Add Honda's standard vehicle stability assist, anti-lock braking system, electronic brake force distribution, brake assist and trailer stability assist and you're 'protected' in your own bubble of safety heaven.

Of course, with the last few snow-ridden winters, motorists have realised the benefits of all-wheel drive and sales of 4x4s have been booming. Sure, there is a two-wheel drive CR-V now available, but if you live on a farm or need to tow a horse box, or you need to tackle narrow, sub-zero country lanes, then I'd recommend you consider the adaptable new four-wheel drive Honda CR-V as your main family vehicle.

FAST FACTS

- Max speed: 118 mph
- 0-62 mph: 9.7 secs
- Combined mpg: 50.4
- Engine: 2199 cc 4 cylinder 16 valve turbo diesel
- Max. power (bhp): 148 at 4000 rpm
- Max. torque (lb/ft): 258 at 2000 rpm
- Max. towing weight (braked) 2000 kg
- CO₂: 149 g/km
- Price: £26,105 on the road

PROS 'N' CONS

- Robust ✓
- Refined ✓
- Practical ✓
- Spacious ✓
- Pricey X