

# A choice hybrid...



Toyota RAV4 Hybrid

*Toyota was responsible for a pivotal change in the motoring scene two decades ago with the launch of the first RAV4. It was a novel type of leisure focused car that forged today's well-liked compact sport utility vehicle (SUV) market.*

**N**ow, the Japanese company has begun a new chapter in RAV4's success story with the introduction of the first RAV4 Hybrid in the UK this year.

The 2.5 VVT-i Hybrid Icon model I drove, at the model's European media presentation in Spain, had a smooth and economical powertrain. It merged a 2494cc petrol engine with an electric motor, and there was a further one running the rear axle to deliver electronic all-wheel drive (AWD).

The AWD ability provides excellent safety and stability when navigating low-grip terrain, as I found out on some gravelly trails just outside of Alicante. The Hybrid certainly parades the refinement you'd envisage because of Toyota's experience with this kind of powertrain. The 'green' car's linear acceleration, channelled through its continuously variable transmission (CVT) auto box, is satisfactory, rather than thrilling, for any setting. What's more, the hybrid tech is clear-cut, demanding no special attention when behind the wheel.

There are three distinctive driving modes offered: Sport, ECO and EV. Electric-only (EV) is meant for short range driving at

subdued speeds when the battery is charged-up, and only works with a light right foot. ECO tempers the drive power and air conditioning for best efficiency. Then Sport opens the gate to greater (and noisier) engine revs and a snappier throttle reply, while decreasing power steering assistance for further road feel.



All this adds up to a class-leading economy figure of 55.4mpg, with official CO2 emissions of 118g/km.

The Hybrid coincides with the new RAV4 line-up, which features fresh exterior styling, enhanced cabin quality, improved technology and safety features.

The frontal design creates a sturdier road presence and includes full LED headlights. At the side, there is a more flowing look, and at the rear the combination lamps and bumper have

been altered, highlighting the car's road stance further.

The quality of the RAV4's cabin has been boosted considerably with a full colour screen and soft-touch materials. New tech features include Toyota's 360-degree Panoramic View Monitor. This gives you sight

of obstacles that would remain unseen in blind spots when using established front and rear cameras, making for safer and easier manoeuvring.

What's more, the latest RAV4's safety specification has been notably upgraded with the addition of the new Toyota Safety Sense assembly of features. In addition to the Lane Departure Alert, Pre-Collision System, Automatic High Beam and Road Sign Assist tech that was also included in the new Avensis and Auris, the RAV4 further profits from Adaptive Cruise Control and a superior Pre-Collision System.

Taken as a whole, the RAV4 Hybrid is comfortable and clever – and you'll be doing your 'solution to the pollution' bit for the world if you buy one. Price: £29,795

*By Tim Barnes-Clay, Motoring Journalist  
tweeting @carwriteups  
Test-driven in Alicante, Spain*



**TOYOTA**