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Honda CR-V 2.0 i-VTEC

Is the latest Honda soft-roader better than the last one?

by Jonathan Goddard published on 7 April 2007

The CR-V has always been a cracking machine, offering a truly car-like driving experience with the ride height and practicality of a 4x4. The last version added great styling, high levels of comfort and relatively low running costs.

Unfortunately, the all-new CR-V is a step backwards. By no means bad, the 2007 version just isn't as good in almost every department as the outgoing one.

The most obvious thing it's impossible to ignore is the aesthetics. Christ, it's ugly. The front-end presents you with a huge disconnect between bonnet and bumper; the odd layout makes it appear someone has slammed their fist down on the hood, forcing the badge to jut into the grille like a snaggletooth.

The elliptical side window design doesn't work either, making the rear-quarter glass too small. Not only does it get lost in a big metal panel it seriously compromises visibility. But worst of all, the spare wheel has gone from the tailgate, meaning the classic CR-V rear end is lost along with the boot space that now has to carry a big old rubber ring.

All things considered, the Honda actually resembles a mini Porsche Cayenne - not a good thing.

Despite the styling, the CR-V looks smart, mostly due to the fact that every panel is superbly fitted and the materials look solid. The build quality is evident everywhere (including the price), with every clunk of door and click of seatbelt providing huge assurance in its capabilities. Inside, it's also good, although there was dubious fitting evident on a couple of dash sections.

The layout is sensible, although the radio is a bit



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of a stretch if you don't have steering-wheel controls. The gearbox sits on the centre console almost at chest height, which works well once you get used to it. There's sufficient space in the cabin, with masses of headroom, but boot space is way less than you'd want - and expect. It's a huge disappointment in this regard, almost unforgivable.

You'll also want at least the ES spec (around £1500 more than the rather lean SE version), while the EX (£24,615 with auto) has it all but comes in mighty pricey.

VERDICT

Honda promised the new CR-V would be its best handling version yet. Wrong. In fact, having driven at least half a dozen of them over the years, the only one I've driven that didn't feel like a normal car is this one. It still drives well and it's fairly well-mannered, but only in the context of other 4x4s and soft-roaders (crucially, this CR-V does not have permanent four-wheel drive). The petrol version also lacks some urgency and didn't offer the economy I was hoping for. The 2.2 i-CTDi is a much better proposition but while you still get the great road presence and commanding driving position, you'll have to do without the excellent optional auto transmission.

Maybe I've been too negative, and maybe that's because I loved the old one so much. If you've never experienced an old CR-V and you're in the market for this type of vehicle, you have two options: check out the new one because it's still better than the opposition or get a nearly-new old shape CR-V.

I know which one I'd do.

At a glance

What is it?

4x4

Good

Supreme build quality, solid, relatively low emissions, comfortable

Bad

Uninvolving, not as practical as you'd think, so-so handling, ugly

Verdict

The best of the soft-roaders returns, but while it isn't exactly bad the latest iteration is somewhat of a let-down

Price 18,815

Our score

6/10

Your score

8/10