



Honda HR-V 5-door

Featuring 1.6 VTEC



What's different?

Five-door variant of Honda's High Rider Vehicle with longer wheelbase and choice of a more powerful 1.6-litre engine.

WE WERE VERY TAKEN WITH THE stylish-but-sensible HR-V when we first drove it just over a year ago. Our only serious gripe was that, with only two side doors, it was awkward to get to the back seats, and once inside there wasn't much rear knee and legroom for adults. Honda promised a five-door version, and now it's arrived.

But it doesn't have just two wide-opening extra doors, it also gains 10cm in its wheelbase (and hence overall length), with the increase given over entirely to back seat passenger space.

Although there's a 10cm sill to step over, once aboard, you sit as high as ever with the same ample headroom and good foot space (now with heater ducts), but in this case there's more kneeroom and leg-stretching space even for lanky occupants. The 50/50 divided backrests don't provide much side support, but they do have four-notch rearward rake adjustment, so passenger complaints are unlikely. It's a pity, however, that the tall (though removable) front head restraints mar the forward view quite so much.

There's not only the choice of three- or five-door body styles, there's now a choice of engines, as well. The

existing 1.6 litre/103bhp power unit is joined by a more powerful 122bhp VTEC version that incorporates Honda's variable valve timing system.

Although peak power is delivered at a heady 6600rpm, this engine isn't at all unpleasantly "top-endy" and happy only at sky-high revs. Indeed, it's delightfully flexible and will pull affably, if none too vigorously, from low down and go on to exhibit lively mid-range torque. It's a rev-happy motor if you want it to be and will spin to the 7000rpm red line with great gusto and a decidedly sporty growl.

With the VTEC engine the three-door HR-V will clock 0-60mph in about 10½sec and the five-door in about 11sec; top speed is quoted as 106mph. Gearing is the same in all manual models (the continuously variable CVT automatic isn't available with the more powerful engine), so the power unit still sounds busy but unstrained when main road and motorway cruising.

Honda claims that extra pillar strengthening and sill reinforcements make (unusually) the five-door stiffer than its three-door counterpart. It certainly has a solid, all-of-a-piece feel, and corners and holds the road in a way that belies its practical, high-riding stance. The steering remains light and direct, and although there's some fidgety firmness on broken surfaces at lower speeds, the ride is generally smooth enough and easy-going.

The HR-V isn't meant to be a serious off-roader, but it's a confidence booster to know that the "on demand" four-wheel drive system is there should you meet treacherous conditions.

With this new five-door HR-V, Honda's mid-size "on roader" adds family car convenience and practicality to its urban chic looks and jaunty demeanour. It's good news all round, because the high seats continue to give a commanding view out, the additional space and extra doors have made all the difference to rear passengers' comfort, while the VTEC engine gives a boost to the already peppy performance.

In short, the longer five-door is a sensible addition to Honda's range of attractive 4x4s, but not so sensible as to lose its appeal to trendy "lifestylers".

FACTS AND FIGURES

ENGINE

Type	longitudinal four in line
Size	1590cc
Valves	belt-driven single OHC, 16 valves with VTEC variable valve timing
Fuel/ignition	multi-point petrol injection with programmed spark timing via coil and distributor 55-litre fuel tank
Power	122bhp at 6600rpm
Torque	106 lb ft at 4900rpm
Remaining specification as shown in R9912	

