

Honda gets built-in vacuum

Odyssey adds dream feature to help keep minivan clean

By Derek Price
CARGAZING.COM

Fear not, parents of messy children. Your dream car has arrived.

The Honda Odyssey has long been a mobile therapy couch for moms and dads, offering enough space, cabin durability and electronic nannies like DVD players to keep parents sane on road trips.

This year, though, Honda reaches a new level of awesomeness by adding the most common-sense feature I've ever seen in a minivan: a built-in vacuum cleaner.

The HondaVac, as it's called, is actually a powerful Shop Vac built into the sidewall of the rear cargo area. With a hose long enough to reach anywhere in the van and enough suction to extract dropped Cheerios from all the nooks and crannies they like to hide in, it's the kind of feature that should have been in minivans since the 1980s.

As a father of three and the owner of an Odyssey myself, I could hear angels singing when the HondaVac was announced.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF HONDA

With a car-like driving feel and innovative features — including a built-in vacuum cleaner on the Touring Elite model — the Honda Odyssey remains one of the best family vehicles you can buy today.

While it works beautifully, there is a downside to it. For 2014, you can only get the HondaVac if you buy

the super-high-end Odyssey Touring Elite model that starts at \$44,450. I'm hoping Honda makes it an option on more affordable trim levels in the future.

Other than the whiz-bang vacuum cleaner, how does the Odyssey stack up?

It remains the most car-like minivan from the driver's seat, feeling remarkably similar to the Honda Accord sedan. It gives you a crisp, firm sense of the road, which is the biggest reason I prefer it over the softer, floppier driving Toyota Sienna and Chrysler Town & Country.

Of course, people who prefer a squishier ride would be happier in those other vans. You feel the pavement more in an Odyssey, which not everyone likes as much as I do.

I also like how the Odyssey's cabin seems so solid and indestructible, an important consideration for those of us who are raising tornadoes as children. It

feels like Honda tested the cabin by handing a kid a baseball bat, sticking them in the van and saying, "Alright, let's see what you can break."

Unfortunately for Honda, buying an Odyssey isn't the no-brainer choice that it used to be. There was a time when this van was head-and-shoulders above the competition — with an unmatched reputation for reliability and refinement — but its competitors have done a great job catching up recently. Strong products from Toyota, Nissan, Chrysler and a new van coming out from Kia in 2015 make the choice a lot tougher.

Still, the Odyssey remains my favorite minivan, if just by a hair. Its communicative driving feel means you get all the benefits of a van — the logical layout, the huge cargo area and the spacious seating that lets you put a demilitarized zone around each child — without having to experience the sloppy, wobbly

driving feel that these vans usually entail.

What was tested?

2014 Honda Odyssey Touring Elite (\$44,450). Options: None. Price as tested (including \$830 destination charge): \$45,280

Wheelbase: 118.1 in.

Length: 202.9 in.

Width: 79.2 in.

Height: 68.4 in.

Engine: 3.5-liter V6 (248 horsepower, 250 lbs.-ft.)

Transmission: Six-speed automatic

Estimated Mileage: 19 city, 28 highway

RATINGS

Style: 7

Performance: 8

Price: 8

Handling: 9

Ride: 6

Comfort: 7

Quality: 9

Overall: 9

Video review

2014 Honda Odyssey
<http://bit.ly/2014odyssey>



Why buy it?

The new HondaVac will make parents cry happy tears. It's a smart feature in a wonderfully engineered van, and its firm driving feel is more crisp and car-like than other products.



The HondaVac stores neatly in the rear sidewall when not in use. It's a brilliant use of space, keeping both the vacuum equipment and hose out of sight while driving.

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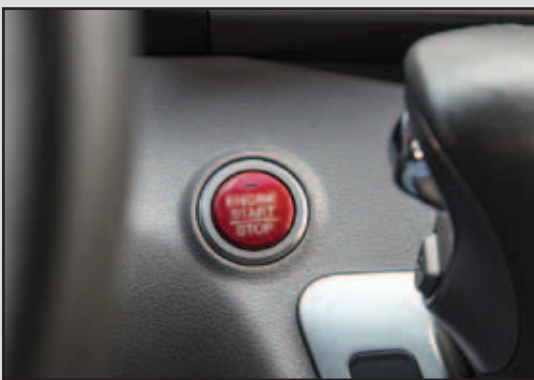
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A CLOSER LOOK



AT A GLANCE: FACTS, FIGURES AND RATINGS

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