

CARGAZING

C-HR Spunky, Surprising

Compact Crossover Has Outgoing, Unusual Sense of Style

By Derek Price
CARGAZING.COM

There was a time when buying a Toyota — especially a small, affordable Toyota like this — meant you had no sense of automotive adventure.

This quintessential Japanese brand is making a dramatic shift, though, from cars that were dull and predictable to ones that are spunky and surprising, at least to the eye.

And no Toyota model illustrates that change better than this one, the new C-HR.

With a starting price of \$22,500, this all-new compact crossover would seem to compete with Toyota's traditional bread-and-butter sedans, the Corolla and Camry. Its base price falls smack dab between the two.

Nothing about the C-HR looks traditional, though.

Toyota says the acronym stands for "Coupe - High Rider," which is an odd choice for a vehicle that is neither a coupe nor rides very high. It has four doors and drives like a



PHOTOS COURTESY OF TOYOTA C-HR

The Toyota C-HR has an unusual design that mixes the layout of a crossover vehicle with the style of a coupe.

zippy compact car, reasonably close to the ground.

It does look a bit coupe-like, though, with a sloping roofline and sleek silhouette that masks its

practicality. Huge fender flares, dramatic sculptural lines and rear door handles mounted unusually high, near the top back corners where they're barely visible, add up to a whimsical and outgoing sense of style.

I love the color palette Toyota offers on this car. My tester came in mint green with a white roof, a combination that reminded my kids of toothpaste. I thought it looked more like classic 1950s American cars.

Step inside, and you'll find a cabin that looks modern but nowhere near as unusual as the body. It's a showplace for what most compact cars look like in 2018: a very horizontal dash, big touchscreen that dominates the center stack, eye-catching air vents and a steering wheel with lots of buttons. There's also a sprinkling of soft-touch material and enough hard plastics to remind you it's not a luxury car.

This cabin is more about content than design. Every trim level,

including the base version, comes with a suite of active safety features called Toyota Safety Sense-P. That means it comes with adaptive cruise control, sensors that can detect pedestrians and brake automatically, and lane departure warning with steering assist that helps to keep the car centered in the lane.

An acoustic glass windshield and decent sound insulation make it quieter than many cars this size.

If I could change one thing about the C-HR, it would be to make its performance match the spunky looks. With a small, four-cylinder engine and continuously variable transmission, the reality of driving it just doesn't fit the body's boisterous hype. It's begging for a turbocharger and manual transmission, but instead its only powertrain offering — a 144-horsepower engine paired to a CVT — is adequate but uninspiring.

The steering, brakes and suspension all feel nicely tuned for

a compromise between sportiness and comfort.

While the base XLE model comes very well equipped for the price, Toyota also offers an XLE Premium trim that adds more features. A blind spot monitor with rear cross-traffic alert, heated front seats and a Smart Key system with push-button start are all included on this higher trim, priced from \$24,350.

What was tested?

2018 Toyota C-HR XLE (\$22,500). Options: Color-keyed body with white roof and mirrors (\$500). Price as tested (including \$995 destination charge): \$23,995

Wheelbase: 103.9 in.

Length: 171.2 in.

Width: 70.7 in.

Height: 61.6 in.

Engine: 2.0-liter four cylinder (144 hp, 139 lbs.-ft.)

Transmission: Continuously variable

Fuel economy: 27 city, 31 highway

RATINGS

Style: 10

Performance: 4

Price: 7

Handling: 6

Ride: 6

Comfort: 6

Quality: 8

Overall: 7

Why buy it?

It's priced like a compact car but has a much more creative, inventive sense of design. Its crossover layout offers practical cargo and passenger space with a coupe-like profile.



The C-HR's interior looks more conventional than its body. It comes standard with radar cruise control that changes the vehicle's speed to flow with traffic.

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A CLOSER LOOK



AT A GLANCE: FACTS, FIGURES AND RATINGS

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