

2018 Toyota C-HR

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spots. It's a good reason to consider the Premium trim version, which includes the aforementioned blind spot detection as well as a rear cross-traffic alert system. And on frosty winter mornings, you can take the edge off the chill with heated seats — also part of the upgraded trim level. Surprisingly, Toyota's Entune infotainment system isn't available, and the onboard system isn't compatible with Android Auto or Apple CarPlay — a negative, for many younger drivers.

Under the hood, the new Toyota packages a 2.0L, DOHC four-cylinder motor with a Continuously Variable Transmission. The engine generates 144 horsepower @ 6,100 rpm, and 139 lb.-ft. of torque @ 3,900 rpm. C-HR has run-about power (the trip from 0-60 takes about 11 seconds). The gearing is such

that it's fine in 'round town driving. But in those situations where RightNow speed is what you need — two lane passing, crowded highway merges — the driver needs to factor in the limitations and act accordingly. Switching to Sport mode helps (though one button access would be quicker than the current, menu dig required to access it).

Sport offers seven, virtual gears, so in automatic or "manumatic" mode, you can hold the car in a lower cog, to maximum response. Keeping your foot to the floor induces CVT droning, as the powertrain works to comply with the request. Some find the sound wearisome, but in practice, it blends in with other ambient noises (wind, tire) as the car gathers speed.

A manual transmission model may be to too much to ask for (take rates on manuals are low across the industry),



The front-drive, two-door compact Toyota C-HR shares the same unibody platform as the Prius and Camry.



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but a turbocharged four in future models would be an option that would find many takers. In a car with a chassis this adaptable, it would be transformative.

Speaking of chassis, the front-drive, two-door compact shares the same unibody platform that rolls beneath Prius and Camry. The suspension is MacPherson struts up front, double wishbone rear, with electrically assisted, rack-and-pinion steering, and four-wheel disc brakes.

Defying its name (the HR in C-HR stands for High Rider, and it isn't) C-HR is an agile handler with a smooth ride, for a small car. It's also good on gas. EPA estimates are 27 miles per gallon city, 31 highway and 29 combined. On a southwestern swing, my test drive combined high speed highways and crawling, city traffic jams, and I logged 32 miles per gallon overall.

A regular contributor to the Times Union for more than 25 years, Dan Lyons is the award-winning author of six books, and photographer of 180 calendars.