

Lyons on Wheels

by Dan Lyons • *Special to The Daily Gazette*

2023 Honda HR-V

MSRP: \$23,640 (LX FWD) As Tested: \$30,590 (EX-L AWD)



Cars and people have at least one thing in common. As they age, they tend to expand in size. With cars, the result is generally favorable. With people, the process gets mixed reviews. This week's test vehicle - the 2023 Honda HR-V - is a good example of this phenomenon. The first generation (1999, which was never exported to the states) measured 161.8" long x 66.9" wide x 62.6" high, and weighed about 2,400 lb.

The tale of the tape for the all-new, Generation 3 edition is 179.8"L x 72.4"W x 63.4"H, and it tips the scales at +/- 3,300 lb.

Bigger, yes, though HR-V is still the smallest of Honda's SUV/Crossover class. It's offered in three trim levels: LX (MSRP: \$23,650), Sport (\$25,650) and EX-L (\$27,450). All are Front Wheel Drive, with AWD available for an additional \$1,300 on any trim level. All grades receive Honda's 2.0L four cylinder engine (158 horsepower @ 6,500 rpm, 138 lb.-ft. of torque @ 4,200 rpm), linked to a Continuously Variable Transmission. Estimated fuel economy numbers are 26/32/28 (FWD) and 25/30/27 (AWD), and I recorded 30 mpg's in my test. 'Round town power was fine, and I had no problem keeping up with good 'ol, track-season, Northway traffic. That said, it wouldn't surprise me if Honda adds a turbo version down the line for top trim levels (as it does for Civic), or a hybrid option. The platform's multilink rear suspension and the new, stiffer body add a fun factor to the driving - something that wasn't previously associated with this model. The steering has a more connected feel with the road, and the car brakes better.



Photos courtesy of the manufacturer



The cabin design is an HR-V highlight. A metal, honeycomb strip runs the width of the dashboard, housing the vents, and splitting the dash visually, north and south. Front and center is the touchscreen (9" on EX-L, 7" on LX and Sport). The EX-L's larger screen has a volume/ on/off knob (though channel selection is a virtual button), and these models also benefit from a sound system upgrade (9 speakers, 180 watts). The infotainment system is compatible with Apple CarPlay and Android Auto (the connection is wireless on EX-L). A straight forward array of HVAC controls lie just beneath the center strip. The design of the center console is really well thought out. The shifter sits high and in easy reach. Cup holders are located away from hand traffic hot spots. A storage shelf midway down the console houses a pair of USB charging ports. EX-L models add a wireless, phone charging pad at the base of the dash. So equipped, driver and passenger can both charge their devices simultaneously (no more rock/paper/ scissors to see who goes first).

Front seats are notably well padded, though they lack lumbar adjustment. HR-V will seat a pair of six footers in back, with like-size folks up front. Gone, with the former, Fit platform, is the Magic Seat that allowed surprisingly tall items to be toted, standing up. However, the new arrangement is well suited to cargo carrying. Capacity ranges from 24.4-55.1 cubic-feet. Rear seatbacks fold flat forward, to accommodate long/bulky items in back. Lifter loading height is comfortably low. Six footers are reminded to duck under the cargo hatch door.

HR-V 3.0 has grown into what many people will find to be the sweet spot for Crossover size: big enough for passengers and cargo, in whatever combination suits your purpose. Compact Crossover shoppers will find it a worthy candidate for their shortlist.

A 40 year resident of the Capital District, Dan Lyons is the author of six automotive books, and photographer of more than 200 calendars.