

by Dan Lyons • *Special to The Daily Gazette*

2023 Toyota Camry Hybrid

Base MSRP: \$ 28,080 (LE) As Tested: \$38,254 (XSE)



We'll know shortly if life begins at 40 for Toyota's Camry. Now in its eighth generation, the 2023 Camry is marking its 39th year in this country. Though surpassed in popularity by crossovers, the sedan segment remains substantial in the states, where Camry has been the top seller in the midsize division for over 20 years. Hybrid versions of Camry joined the lineup in 2007, and for 2023, they're offered in five variations: LE (MSRP: \$28,080), SE (\$29,615), SE Nightshade (\$30,615), XLE (\$32,970) and XSE (\$33,520). All are front wheel drive. My XSE test drive car had an as-delivered price of \$38,254.

Camry's hybrid system links a 2.5L four cylinder gas engine (176 h.p., 163 lb.-ft. of torque) with an electric motor (118 h.p.), for a combined output of 208 h.p. The electronically controlled Continuously Variable Transmission simulates a conventional transmission's feel, with six "speeds" available, via the console shifter (or steering wheel paddles on SE/XSE). The 0-60 mph times that I've seen quoted for the Camry Hybrid are in the mid/high seven second range, which is about average for the category. Owing to the instant-on nature of electric power, it feels faster off the dime, and there's less throttle response at highway speeds. Fuel economy is robust. EPA estimates are 44/47/46 and I logged 39 during my test. Drivers can select Normal, Eco and EV driving modes. Handling is confident, if not sporty, and ride quality is worthy



Photos courtesy of the manufacturer

of the longest family outings. The lack of AWD availability isn't a plus in winter. Brake systems on hybrids are multi-taskers. They're assigned not only the task of stopping, but also of repurposing the energy used in the braking process, to recharge the hybrid battery. Smooth brake pedal feel is sometimes a casualty of this process. No so here, as you can't feel any appreciable difference between gas or hybrid Camry's in terms of stopping.

The interior in my top-trim XSE test car had a clean look and a comfortable feel. I found the overall, layout of controls to be easy to use, and non-distracting. My car had the upgraded, 9" center touchscreen with onboard navigation, part of the Navigation Package (\$1,760). That bundle also includes an audio upgrade, trading the standard, 6-speaker studio system for a 9-speaker, 800 watt JBL setup. Both the standard and available sound systems are compatible with Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, and include a three month trial of Sirius XM. Also fitted here was the Driver Assist Package (\$1,430), which adds a 10" head-up display, a panoramic (bird's-eye) view monitor, front/rear parking assist with automatic braking, and ventilated seats.

Camry Hybrid's trunk capacity trails the last two midsize Hybrids that I tested - Accord and Sonata - but at 15.1 cu.-ft., it's usably large, with a low liftover height for loading. The split, rear seat backs can be dropped semi-flat, revealing a pass-through, to accommodate long items in the trunk. Because their ride height is lower than many SUV's and crossovers, sedans can be a good choice for those who put a premium on easy entry/exit. Camry fills that bill, and with six footers in front, there's adequate room for same size passengers in back.



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