

by Dan Lyons • *Special to The Daily Gazette*

2023 Toyota RAV4 Hybrid

MSRP: \$31,225x (LE) As Tested: \$43,454 (Limited AWD)



Two weeks ago, we test drove the Honda CR-V. This week, we look at the Toyota RAV4. These two, veteran nameplates have been competing in the compact crossover class for decades. Keeping up with the times, both are now offered with hybrid powertrains, and our test drive this time was in the RAV4 Hybrid Limited. The top trim level in the series, it had an as-tested price of \$43,454.

This generation of RAV4 made its debut in 2019. The 2023 lineup includes a new member. The Woodland Edition (MSRP: \$34,025), is a ruggedized version of the RAV4, targeting trail going drivers, with a beefed-up suspension, chunkier, all-terrain tires and exclusive cosmetics. All trim levels (LE, XLE, SE, XLE Premium, XSE, Limited and Woodland) get Toyota's new, infotainment system and digital dash for 2023. In the case of the Hybrid Limited, this is a 12.3" color, digital dash, with a 10.5" center touchscreen. The system is Apple CarPlay and Android Auto compatible, and the connection is wireless. An 11-speaker JBL audio system (8 channels, 800 watts), replaces the 6-speaker setup on Limited models. HVAC controls are found midway up the center stack. The buttons and knobs array make short work of adjustments, and are minimally distracting. Infotainment and system adjustments are done via the touchscreen, with select, secondary controls embedded in the steering wheel. Row two headroom and legroom are 39.5" and 37.8" in RAV4 Hybrid, which compare to 39.1" and 40.4" in the recently tested CR-V. In practical terms, six footers



Photos courtesy of the manufacturer



can (just) fit behind like-size passengers in RAV4. Cargo capacity ranges from 37.6-69.8 cu.-ft., in the Toyota, depending on how you deploy the seats. That compares to 36.3-76.5 in the Honda. RAV4's back seatbacks fold forward to a mostly flat load floor, for longer items. Cargo liftover height in back is comfortably low.

Power for RAV4 Hybrid is provided by a 2.5L Atkinson cycle four cylinder gas engine, combined with a pair of AC motors and a lithium-ion battery pack. The combined, system power output is 219 horsepower, which is actually more than the gas powered version (203 h.p.). I've seen zero to sixty times on RAV4 Hybrid from reputable sources, and they land in the low to mid-seven second range. That's sufficient power for all your needs. The torque from the electric power source boosts your off the line pickup, and there's enough under foot to merge as needed and go with the flow of Northway traffic. EPA says that your expected fuel economy will be 41/38/40. I logged 37 mpg's during my test drive.

RAV4's ride quality makes it a good choice for long trips, when they arise. And day to day, the overall dimensions are big enough to not feel undersized on a crowded highway, yet small enough to make parking straight forward. Speaking of which, the bird's-eye camera system – rare, in this segment – really takes the angst and neck gymnastics out of parking and backing in tight quarters. The suspension does a nice job of soaking up rough patches of road (not that we have any around here..). RAV4 doesn't feel sporty, yet corners with confidence. All Wheel Drive is standard. While that may not matter now, come next winter, you'll be glad that AWD has your 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.