

by Dan Lyons • *Special to The Daily Gazette*

2023 Toyota Corolla Cross Hybrid

MSRP: \$27,970 (Hybrid S) \$29,290 (Hybrid SE) \$31,065 (Hybrid XSE)



Introduced in 2022, the Corolla Cross slots into the Toyota lineup as the entry level crossover. One step below the RAV4 (which has a starting sticker price of \$28,275), Corolla Cross is offered in six trim levels, starting at \$23,610. The top three trims are new for 2023, as Toyota has introduced hybrid powered versions of Corolla Cross.

Built on the same platform as the standard Corolla, Cross versions are considerably taller (8"+), slightly wider and not as long as the sedans. The raised ride height is consistent with competitive crossovers, and popular with most people, affording ease of entry/exit and better visibility. Inside, Cross bears a strong resemblance to its Corolla siblings. The layout of HVAC controls is comfortably close to the driver, and the combination of dials and buttons are easy to operate. Top center on the dash in Corolla Hybrid is a new-for-'23, 8-inch touchscreen interface for the infotainment system, with wireless compatibility with Apple CarPlay and Android Auto. Hard plastic and thin padding on touch points hint at Corolla Cross' entry level positioning. Six footers fit easily in front, and can also be accommodated in back, provided that those in row one don't get too laid back with their seat rake. I found the front seat to be a little short on lumbar support, though reasonable backs may differ in their needs. A heated, 10-way power driver's seat (including adjustable lumbar support) is standard on top-level Hybrid XSE. Cargo capacity measures 21.5 cu.-ft. behind the back seat, which compares with 24.6 in non-hybrid Cross, and 13.1 cu.-ft. of trunk space in Corolla sedan. Rear seatbacks fold to a mostly flat load floor; a pull-out



Photos courtesy of the manufacturer



cover to hide cargo contents from inquiring eyes is optional on SE and standard on XSE.

The big change from last year is the addition of available hybrid power. All Corolla Cross Hybrids are All Wheel Drive, and all share the same hybrid power system as the current Prius.

A 2.0L Atkinson-cycle four cylinder gas engine combines with a trio of electric motors, a lithium-ion battery pack and a Continuously Variable Transmission. The combined, system power output is 196 horsepower. That compares with 169 h.p. in the gas powered version, and it's a difference you can feel. Electric power adds to the off the line, 'round town responsiveness. The 0-60 times fall in the mid 7-second range (about two seconds faster than the gas Cross), so there's sufficient power under foot for passing and on-ramp merging. Some CVT droning is evident at lower speeds, though it mixes into the wash of ambient driving noise (wind, road) as speed increases. Hybrid Cross models also post higher fuel economy numbers than the gas powered versions. EPA says that you can expect 45/38/42. That compares with 29/32/30 for a gas powered Cross with AWD. My recent road test covered over 700 miles with a heavy percentage of highway miles, and I averaged a frugal, 39.9 mpg's. Driveline aside, Corolla Cross has a comfortable ride, and its size is such that it's easy to negotiate tight, city streets or parking spaces. I consider blind spot monitoring to be a must have feature. On Corolla Cross Hybrid, it's standard on SE and XSE, and not available on S.

In my review of the first Corolla Cross models last year, I mentioned that a hybrid version was in the works for 2023, and that the combination of added horsepower and higher mileage might be worth waiting for. That's now come to pass, and my opinion has been confirmed.

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