

Modest Superachiever

by Joe Sage

Hybrid powertrains have gone mainstream—locomotives, ships and world champion racecars have implemented them widely for years. You've been able to go to a car dealership and buy one for twenty years. Yet some production hybrids cling to specific "look at me" styling and branding. We like that the Honda Accord Hybrid doesn't make a show of its hybrid nature. It just transparently goes about its remarkably frugal business.

The exterior is basically indistinguishable from other models, and instruments are quite normal, without hypermiler game boards dominating. It is what it is, and that's something quite remarkable.

The Earth Dreams® gasoline engine itself is a showpiece of new lightweight, low-friction, fuel-sipping technologies. Add hybrid electric power, and horsepower rises by almost 50 percent.

You do have elements of control over performance. When you're feeling a bit more competitive and perhaps a bit less virtuous, Sport mode provides an immediate kick in the pants.

Handling, steering and tight cornering are impressive, though some speedbumps were harsh. Honda's right side blind spot camera, activated by the right turn signal, is as magical as a crystal ball.

A non-hybrid Honda Accord starts at \$22,355 for an LX, and seven trim levels, with two Sport



models and three EX models (including a V6), run up to top-trim Touring at \$34,830. Accord Hybrid starts at \$29,605, but stays close in price through three trims total, capping it off with our top Touring example at \$35,955, where just an \$1125 differential brings you hybrid powertrain magic that boosts your highway fuel mileage from 32 mpg to 47, and your city mileage from 23 to a whopping 49 mpg—well more than double your fuel mileage for a three percent price bump. It adds up to our persistent thought while driving the Honda Accord Hybrid: why don't all cars do this?

Do you buy a hybrid to show off your green credentials? Or just to save fuel, reduce emissions and generally act upon your own sensibilities? For the latter, we have a perfectly normal and very popular compact-midsize sedan, but with all the rewards of a hybrid powertrain, yet you can keep the virtue all to yourself if you want.

The Honda Accord Hybrid will provide satisfaction guaranteed *and* your money back, a smooth operator that makes you feel good about yourself while enjoying solid performance and a very full feature set—all the while slashing more than half your annual fuel budget. It won't take long to come out ahead on this deal. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	2.0L DOHC 16v I-VTEC Atkinson cycle
HP/TORQUE.....	143 hp / 129 lb-ft
HYBRID ELECTRIC MOTOR.....	AC synch perm magnet
HP/TORQUE.....	181 hp / 232 lb-ft
TOTAL SYSTEM HORSEPOWER	212 hp
TRANSMISSION / DRIVETRAIN	elec CVT / FWD
BRAKES	vented front, solid rear discs
STEERING.....	rack & pinion electric
SUSPENSION.....	FR: McPherson strut; R: multilink, front and rear stabilizer bars
WHEELS / TIRES	17x7.5 alloy, P225/50 R17 all-season
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	194.1 in / 109.3 in
SEATING / CARGO CAPACITY.....	five / 13.5 cu.ft
WEIGHT	3483 lb
MPG.....	49/47/48 (city/hwy/comb)

INCLUDES: Leather trimmed seats and steering wheel, 7" touchscreen display, sat nav, voice recognition, multi-view rear camera and right lane camera, premium 7-spkr audio w subwoofer, Apple/Android, wheel-mounted controls, Bluetooth, Pandora, SMS text, USB, keyless entry/start, dual-zone climate, rear console vents, driver 10-way power seat w 2 memory sets, 4-way passenger, heated seats, auto-dim mirror, visor lights, map lights, sunglass holder, one-touch power moonroof, LED headlights/DRLs/fogs/taillights, heated side mirrors w turn signals, remote engine start, rear deck spoiler, ACE body structure, stability assist, ABS, brake assist, EBD, forward collision warning, collision mitigation braking, adaptive cruise, lane keep assist, lane departure warning, road departure mitigation.

BASE PRICE	\$35,955
DESTINATION CHARGE:	835
TOTAL	\$36,790

