

EV demystified

BY JOE SAGE

If you've been equal parts intrigued and put off by the whole EV thing, we recommend you give this one a try. Toyota, who demystified the hybrid, has now demystified the EV, as the (admittedly awkwardly named) bZ4X delivers great utility and a great drive in a simple, solid and satisfying manner. You get the whole EV experience, wrapped in a whole familiar overall driving experience—the latest technology, while you feel right at home.

Toyota did not dive full speed right into EVs, and they took some heat for it from proponents of proposed or impending mandates. This was (predictably) a good move on their part. Others let their seasoned powertrain engineers go and scrambled for a new wave of EV designers. But Toyota has long had some of the most advanced internal combustion and specifically hybrid talent of anybody. They

wisely hung onto their people, and now they are able to develop the best of everything, in models and volumes that suit actual market demand.

Classified as a "small SUV," the bZ4X turns out to be fairly large. It's a good-looking vehicle, with the visual stance of a long and low streamliner. What's best is that it's not derivative—it has its own styling from tip to tail, unlike so many EVs clearly adapted from existing lineups.

There are probably a lot of people who don't know or care if they're driving a 4- or 6-cylinder vehicle or what kind of transmission they have, as long as it's going, stopping and turning according to their wishes and commands. EVs have been a different animal, and many people probably tend to expect a learning curve and a very different experience in them, in most cases rightly so.

But this EV is transparent. Nothing is lost in translation. All you're doing is driving. It's operating as you expect, going where you want, responding as you wish, the only differences being that you have an extremely quick and accurate vehicle at a more routine vehicle's price, and you're going to have to plug it in instead of going to a gas pump when it's time to refuel.

While the lineup is simple, which keeps development costs down, it adds up to broad choice. The 2025 Toyota bZ4X has two trims, XLE and Limited, either one with a choice of FWD or AWD, plus there is a special Nightshade Edition (AWD) this year, for a total of five versions, in an attractive price range from \$37,070 to 43,880.

Its hatch format provides 27.7 cu.ft of cargo volume (or 25.8 with JBL speakers). Range till recharge varies from 222 to 252 miles depending upon version (see sidebar).

Instead of piling on unneeded or obstructive

cleverness, Toyota engineers have kept the interface largely clean and mainstream.

We did have a range of comments on various specific features during our week, which is typical in any (some moreso than others). But all items were quickly enough resolved or ignored, leaving us with a very positive driving experience, leading in turn to a very positive lasting impression.

More importantly, we had a range of comments about its power and accuracy, its command of complex freeway scenarios at speed, unencumbered overall so you can simply enjoy the drive experience.

Maybe it's just us. Maybe it's Toyota's approach of easing into the space. Maybe the world changed. But it is now completely at your own discretion to enjoy an EV or not. Nobody is making you. And it's completely at their discretion whether to build them or not—the free economy formula that brings products people love.

If Toyota was taking its time (or more likely taking a realistic pulse) before diving into EVs, it was worth the wait. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY	Toyota, Aichi, Japan
EPA CLASS	small SUV
SEATING CAPACITY	five
MOTORS	dual electric motors (80 kW ea)
HP	system total: 214 hp
BATTERY/PACK	li-ion traction battery, 72.8 kWh capacity (AWD), 355 V, dual-voltage cable, DC charge compat (150 kW)
TRANSMISSION	na
DRIVETRAIN	AWD w X-MODE (snow/dirt; deep snow/mud; grip controls)
DRIVE MODES	eco, regen braking boost, downhill assist control
SUSPENSION	F: indep MacPherson strut-type w stblzr bar; R: multi-link w stblzr bar
STEERING	elec pwr-asst rack & pinion
BRAKES	F: 12.9 vented; R: 12.5 vented
WHEELS	20-in multi-spoke machine-finish alloys w gray accents
TIRES	Bridgestone Enliten Turanza EL 450 235/50R20 100V M+S
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	184.6 / 112.2 in
HEADROOM (F/R)	38.6 / 37.1 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	42.1 / 35.3 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	8.1 in
TURNING CIRCLE	40.0 ft
CARGO CAPACITY	27.7 cu.ft (or w JBL speakers 25.8 cu.ft)
WEIGHT	(Limited AWD) 4464 lb
CHARGING COMPAT	SAE J1772 / CCS1 AC Level 1, AC Level 2, DC Fast Charge
RANGE	(Limited AWD) 222 mi
MPG	(MPGe) 112/92/102 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE	\$49,260
LIMITED WEATHER PKG: heated rear seats, front radiant foot-and-leg heater	350
JBL PREMIUM AUDIO: 9-sprk, subwoofer	580
SPECIAL COLOR: Supersonic Red	425
TWO-TONE PAINT	500
SPLIT ROOF REAR SPOILER	200
ILLUM CARGO SILL	425
ILLUM DOOR SILLS	425
CARGO NET	59
CARPETED FLOOR MAT / CARGO MAT	309
DESTINATION CHARGE	1350
TOTAL	\$53,883

2025 TOYOTA bZ4X LINEUP

	FWD	AWD
HP/torque	201/196	214/248
XLE	\$37,070	\$39,150
Range (miles)	252	228
MPGe (c/h/c)	131/107/119	114/94/104
Limited	41,800	43,880
Range (miles)	236	222
MPGe (c/h/c)	121/102/112	112/92/102
Nightshade Edition		40,420
Range (miles)		222
MPGe (c/h/c)		112/92/102

THE NAME GAME

We were curious to learn whether "bZ4X" would just roll off our tongues by the end of a week with it. Not really. It's a pretty magical entry that could benefit from a more magical name.

EV Charging Resources

CHARGING STATIONS

aps.com
blinkcharging.com
chargepoint.com
electrifyamerica.com
evgo.com
plugshare.com
tesla.com

HOME CHARGERS

Check all the above plus amazon.com

EV VISITOR'S GUIDE

visitarizona.com

MOBILE CHARGING

beechargedev.com
mobilechargingaz.com
prioritytow.com

