



Honda Jazz (2008 - 2015)

From Tokyo to Huis ten Bosch

Car review | What's the best car for a journey from Japan to the Netherlands? Perhaps a big limousine which munches the miles with great ease? Or how about a Gran Turismo that makes every moment enjoyable? What about a mighty off-roader than conquers all? As far as Autozine is concerned the Honda Jazz Hybrid fits the bill the best. Read why.

The journey starts in Tokyo, Japan. Tokyo is a metropolis where space is at a premium. Skyscrapers dominate the cityscape. Roads are layered for local, regional and long distance traffic. Metros operate underground, trains at street level and monorails hover above it all. Even pedestrians can use underground walkways, traditional pavements or elevated bridges that interconnect buildings.



Tokyo: Space

In a city like this a big car is a real nuisance. Yet, a long journey requires a lot of luggage. This is the first reason to opt for the Jazz, because this compact Honda is a true space miracle. Since the fuel tank isn't mounted underneath the rear seat but instead under

the front seats, the Jazz offers more boot space than other compact cars.

To increase cabin space even more, the nose is short and the dashboard is placed to the front as much as possible. This is why the room in the front is excellent as well. Regrettably, the front seats haven't been designed to suit the European posture; the seats are too short and don't support the lower legs very well.



The Jazz may seem a tad expensive for a car of this size, but that's because of all the bells and whistles that come as standard. For example, the test car was fitted with keyless entry, a parking aid, electric windows, heated front seats and an elaborate audio and satnav device (all in Japanese). There's lots of storage spaces, cupholders and more in the cabin. So once everyone is installed, it is time to set off for the great voyage.

Nagoya: Hybrid

The first destination is Nagoya, some 350 km (215 miles) south of Tokyo, for a visit to the lion's den: the Toyota headquarters and its museums. Toyota is almost synonymous with hybrid cars, but in fact Honda was the first to sell a hybrid car worldwide.



Despite the rather inappropriate car, the hosts at Toyota aren't any less hospitable. In fact they show great interest in the Honda! That's because Honda's take on hybrid technology differs from Toyota's. Both rely on the principle that an electric motor is most efficient at low, irregular speeds while an internal combustion engine is at its best on long distances at a relatively high constant speed. By recuperating energy while braking and coasting, the electric motor runs on "free" electricity.

A Toyota hybrid mainly uses the electric engine at low speeds, switches to the petrol engine at higher speeds and uses both at the same time when accelerating at full throttle. As a general rule, the Honda is always powered by the petrol engine and the electric engine only assists briefly while accelerating or climbing in order to improve fuel efficiency.



Expressway: Efficiency

The difference between the two views on hybrid technology is obvious in real life. Toyota's system is more refined and offers more comfort. Honda's system is less complicated and therefore more affordable. In real life both systems offer about the same fuel efficiency.

The average fuel consumption over the entire journey was just 4.3 litres per 100 km (64 mpg). In a country like Japan that's a blessing, because driving a car here is expensive. Very expensive.



Almost all roads are toll roads. Access to the Tokyo ring road costs 900 yen (about 5 GBP), not matter the distance. Those who don't have a so-called "ETC"-card pay about 0.2 GBP per kilometer on highways. In big cities 20 GBP for a night's parking is no exception.



Hiroshima: Performance

The next destination is Hiroshima, about 550 km (340 miles) from Nagoya. That seems like a fair distance, but in Japan the speed limits are very low. On ring roads the speed limit is set at 40 or 60 km/h (25 to 37 mph). On highways 80 or sometimes 100 km/h (50 to 62 mpg) is the maximum allowed speed. At that pace 550 km is still a serious distance!

Even though the Japanese seem very law abiding, they blissfully ignore the speed limits. It seems as if the government predicted just that and set the speed limit so low that even the most notorious speed freak will still go slow. When yours truly also breaks the law, both of the engines in the Jazz work together for maximum performance. This is a nippy little car, and in the end Hiroshima isn't that far away at all.



Central Station. What's happening here? It's like being in a dream!

In the 17th and 18th centuries Holland was the only country allowed to trade with Japan. To commemorate, a theme park named "Huis ten Bosch" has been built near the former trade post. At "Huis ten Bosch" not only have well-know Dutch buildings have been copied verbatim, but even the famous canals, city squares and shopping streets have been recreated as well! The average Dutchman would feel right at home here!

Fukuoka: Dynamics

After a visit to the Mazda factory in Hiroshima, the drive continues south. Fukuoka is often called the "most liveable" city of Japan. Here the roads gradually change from long and straight to hilly and winding, so the Jazz can show its dynamic side. During a first test drive some years ago, the Jazz hybrid didn't handle as well as the basic model.

It seems as if Honda has listened to the complaints, because this 2013 model doesn't tilt as much while cornering and provides more feedback to the driver. Steering is still light and devoid of all feeling, but it is direct. That means that even a slight movement of the steering wheel is enough to corner, which still gives the Jazz a dynamic feel.

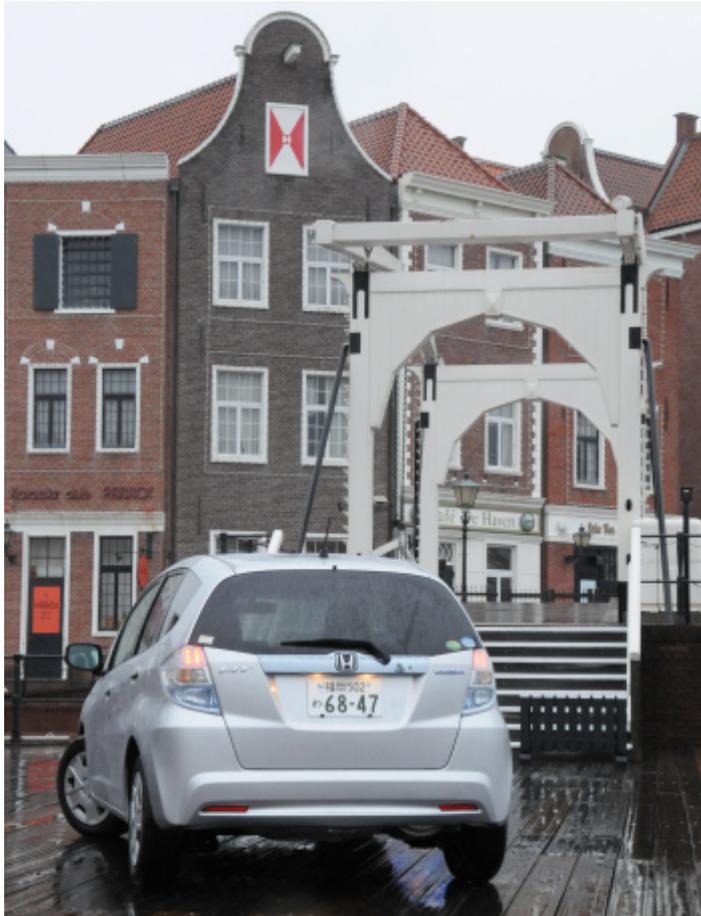


Yet "Huis ten Bosch" is Holland with a Japanese twist, because behind those traditional Dutch facades 3D theatres, haunted houses, roller coasters, souvenir shops and countless sushi bars can be found. In a way "Huis ten Bosch" is even better than the original, because there's no crime, everything is spotlessly clean and the streets are free of traffic. Except for that one Honda Jazz that is...



Nagasaki: The Power of Dreams

From Fukuoka the Jazz heads for Nagasaki. And then something strange happens! The traffic signs show a strangely familiar name: "Huis ten Bosch"? Isn't that in The Netherlands? A while later a famous Dutch church appears at the horizon, followed by Amsterdam



Conclusion

What's the best car for a journey from Tokyo to Huis ten Bosch? As far as Autozine is concerned the Honda Jazz Hybrid fits the bill the best. In city traffic the Jazz offers all the advantages of a compact car, while at the same time it offers the space of an MPV. All creature comforts are taken care of, without going overboard and making the car unaffordable.

As long as electric cars aren't capable of covering long distances without stopping to charge, a hybrid car is the most sensible choice. The Jazz Hybrid is more economic than the average compact car and as a bonus the electric motor improves performance. The hybrid engine also improves comfort levels, so the Jazz really is the best car for the job. There's a good reason why this car is named "Fit" in Japan. ■



Specifications

Honda Jazz (2008 - 2015) Hybrid HX

Size and weight



Length x width x height	390 x 170 x 153 cm
Wheelbase	250 cm
Kerb weight	1.134 kg
Trailer	unknown
Trailer - braked	unknown
Fuel capacity	40 l
Luggage space	300/883 l
Tyre size	175/65R15

Engine and performance



Capacity	1339 cc
Cylinders / valves	4/4
Max power	88 PS @ 5800 rpm
Max torque	121 Nm @ 4500 rpm
Drive	front wheels
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	12.3 secs
Top speed	175 km/h
Average mileage	4.5 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	4.6 l / 100 km
Mileage extra urban	4.4 l / 100 km
CO2 emissions	104 gr / km

Price

Price	Â£ 19,250
Price base model	Â£ 11,695