



Toyota Auris Hybrid

Green power

Car review | Hybrid cars have more than proved themselves over the last few years. Thanks to a combination of two engines, a hybrid car offers the best of both worlds. An electric motor is efficient in the city, while a petrol engine is best suited to cover long distances. However, up to now hybrid cars had rather special looks and a ditto price tag. This put many potential buyers off. So now the well-known Toyota Auris is also available with hybrid drive. Does Toyota finally offer a hybrid car for the regular people?

Feast your eyes on this. Indeed, a decent looking car but other than that nothing special. And that is exactly what Toyota was aiming for! Up to now hybrid cars didn't only have special technology, they had special looks as well. For many that was too flashy or too much of a sign saying: "I want to improve the world". The Auris on the other hand, is an everyday, inconspicuous family hatchback.

Familiar

Once inside the Auris Hybrid it also feels like a familiar car. While the Toyota Prius has an almost futuristic cabin, the Auris Hybrid looks like any other Auris. This includes a beautiful floating centre console and a handy double glove compartment.



Recently the Auris has been upgraded, so the materials used now have a higher quality look and feel. Despite the facelift the audio and satnav seem to be outdated compared to the competition. The lack of an iPod-interface is especially a tell tale sign of the age of Toyota's entertainment system.

When first designing the Auris a hybrid version was never even considered. Despite this the space in the

front and back is still ample. Only the boot is a bit smaller than usual, but still features a handy double floor. The back seat can still be folded for maximum luggage space (753 litres).

Hybrid

Instead of a rev counter the Auris Hybrid has a "power gauge". This is because this vehicle has two engines and two rev counters would be unworkable. The "power gauge" shows how much power is being used, despite which engine generates it.



The computer decides which engine is the most efficient at any time. As a general rule, city traffic is handled by the electric motor. The Auris Hybrid can cover 1.2 miles on the electric motor alone, at a maximum speed of 30 mph. The petrol engine is most efficient on the highway. When necessary both power sources can work together, for example to quickly overtake another car. The electricity required for the electric motor is generated while driving (mainly when coasting or braking); the Auris never has to be plugged into a wall socket at home.



Handling

Those who are not interested in the Auris' technology, can blissfully ignore all the extra information. Driving the Auris Hybrid doesn't require any special skills. Even better: because the car is fitted with the automatic gearbox as standard, the Hybrid is easier to drive than a regular Auris!

Yet, the first miles are a remarkable experience. After pressing the start-button, only a few warning lights show that the car is "turned on". There is not engine noise in the cabin, because the petrol engine is only started when necessary. The Auris Hybrid sets off on the electric motor, only when exceeding 30 mph will the petrol engine (almost unnoticeably) take over.



Performance

Performance is almost equal to a normal Auris. Only the way the car delivers its power differs. When accelerating from an already high speed, both engines will work together making it feel like the Auris always has a tail wind. The ("CVT") automatic gearbox sometimes makes a whining noise, when desperately seeking an ideal gear ratio.

Noises from the wind and tyres (with low rolling resistance) are equal to a regular Auris. The batteries required for the hybrid drive system make the Hybrid significantly heavier than a normal Auris.

Toyota successfully altered the suspension and steering to compensate for the extra weight. This is why the Auris Hybrid has excellent handling. This certainly isn't an eco-friendly vehicle that is merely suitable for low speeds; instead this green car is fun to drive! The fine roadholding also means the Auris Hybrid reacts safely and predictably in an emergency situation.



Fuel economy

When driving as normal, the Auris Hybrid uses about 5 litres of petrol per 100 km (56 mpg). For maximum

performance the so-called "Power Mode" can be engaged. This makes the two engines work together and the reaction to the accelerator is more direct. In this case performance is excellent. Even when driving fast and using "Power Mode" continuously, the test car only consumed 6 litres per 100 km (47 mpg). Despite its high powered engine, the Auris Hybrid can not/may not tow a trailer.

To get the most out of every drop of fuel, the Auris offers a range of driving aids. In "Eco Mode" it hardly responds to the accelerator at all and all systems go "green". Even the air conditioning goes into economy mode.



The automatic gearbox has a "B" mode, for engine braking; this forces the car to generate even more electricity than usual when going down hill. Later that energy can be used by pressing the "EV" (Electric Vehicle) button in city traffic and forcing the car only to use the electric motor. At that time the Auris literally uses no fuel at all! To be perfectly clear: the computer always chooses the most economical way to generate or use power. Only those who want to control this

themselves, can influence the system for even better fuel economy.

When adapting an eco-friendly driving style, the Auris Hybrid consumes 4 litres per 100 km (70 mpg); exactly like Toyota promises. This makes the Auris as frugal as the futuristic (and more expensive!) Prius. On top of that it is easier to drive economically with the Auris than with the Prius. This makes the Auris not only cheaper to buy, but also to run.



Conclusion

Does the Toyota Auris bring hybrid drive to the regular people? Yes, without a doubt. The Auris Hybrid offers all the innovative technology that made the Prius such a success. That same technology is now wrapped in a more familiar package. The space and practical use of the Auris have hardly been affected, only the boot is a bit smaller. Handling and safety are still on the same, high level as with the regular Auris.

In daily life the hybrid drive system only offers advantages. The first is that the Auris Hybrid is extremely fuel efficient. Toyota promises the car will do 70 mpg and with a calm driving style this can actually be realized. When not changing one's driving style this hybrid does 56 mpg, making the Auris still more frugal than even the most compact city cars. Finally, thanks to the hybrid drive the Hybrid offers fine performance and even more comfort than a normal Auris. Green power at its best! ■

Specifications

Toyota Auris Hybrid 1.8 Hybrid T-Spirit

Size and weight

Length x width x height	422 x 176 x 151 cm
Wheelbase	260 cm
Kerb weight	1.380 kg
Trailer	unknown
Trailer - braked	unknown
Fuel capacity	45 l
Luggage space	279/753 l
Tyre size	195/65R15

Engine and performance



Capacity	1798 cc
Cylinders / valves	4/4
Max power	136 PS @ 5200 rpm
Max torque	142 Nm @ 4000 rpm
Drive	front wheels
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	11.4 secs
Top speed	180 km/h
Average mileage	3.8 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	3.8 l / 100 km
Mileage extra urban	3.8 l / 100 km
CO2 emissions	89 gr / km

Price

Price	Â£ 20,700
Price base model	Â£ 11,995