

Honda Civic Hatchback 2.0 i-VTEC Type R 3dr



ON THE ROAD

Performance ★★★★★

In this world of spiralling horsepower, the Honda's 198bhp looks a bit weedy. It isn't, as long as you're prepared to rev the 2.0-litre engine. Keep the rev-counter hovering around the 5500rpm VTEC changeover point and the Type R flies, accompanied by a true race-car howl. Acceleration from low speeds in a high gear can be pedestrian, but the fast gearbox makes changing down a genuine delight.

Ride & handling ★★★★★

The Type R provides the sort of handling other hot hatches dream of. Tenacious grip and lightning-quick reactions allow it to attack corners with unflappable confidence and poise, and body lean is all but absent. Be careful in the wet, though - it becomes a handful. The ride is firm, even for a hot hatch, but driving enthusiasts will happily live with it.

Refinement ★★★★★

Treat it mean and the Type R emits the sort of howl that makes you want to be even meaner. When you aren't on such a mission, though, the engine stays quiet and subdued. Wind and road noise are well suppressed, too. It's a shame that the party is ruined by the suspension, which clatters annoyingly over high speed bumps.

OWNERSHIP

IN THE CABIN

Behind the wheel ★★★★★

Everything the driver needs is exactly where it needs to be. The titanium gearknob is a short reach away, the steering adjusts for both reach and height and the big bucket seats hold you securely while offering plenty of long-distance comfort. However, the two-tier dash is slightly fussy, and the spoiler positioned across the rear window impedes visibility.

Space & practicality ★★★★★

Front-seat occupants are spoiled, with loads of leg- and headroom, and plenty of space to avoid elbow clashes. Things are slightly less promising in the rear, which is tricky to get into and out of, and which feels a bit cramped once you're in. The small rear windows make it feel claustrophobic, too. At least the generously proportioned boot will be able to take everyone's luggage, and then some.

Equipment ★★★★★

The basic Civic Type R isn't exactly overburdened with kit. You get front electric windows and a CD player, but that's about it for the luxuries. Spend the extra £1000 on the GT model, which Honda says 80% of buyers do, and climate control and front foglights are included, as are curtain airbags.

