

Honda Insight Hatchback



ON THE ROAD

Performance ★★★★★

The Insight's combination of a 1.3-litre petrol engine and battery-powered electric motor is okay around town, but it struggles to reach the national speed limit and overtaking on motorways is a painfully slow experience. This is particularly true if you follow the Insight's economic driving guidelines and engage the Econ switch, which cuts torque and adjusts the throttle settings.

Ride & handling ★★★★★

There's not enough feedback through the steering wheel, which is a problem considering how sharply the car responds to small inputs from the driver. On smooth surfaces the ride is fine, but the front suspension crashes noisily into potholes, while the rear end can be bucked about by speed humps.

Refinement ★★★★★

The cabin, engine and gearbox are all quiet when driving slowly to maximise economy and minimise emissions. Wind noise isn't a problem, even at motorway speeds, but the engine and transmission kick up a real racket if you accelerate hard.

OWNERSHIP

Buying & owning ★★★★★

It's cheaper than a Toyota Prius, but Honda dealers are miserly with discounts so that could narrow the financial advantage. Official fuel economy and emissions are inferior to the Toyota Prius's, but they're still good. CO2 emissions of just over 100g/km mean the Insight isn't exempt from VED, but company car tax bills are low and it's free to drive into London's Congestion Charge zone.



Quality & reliability ★★★★★

The battery is designed to last for the lifetime of the vehicle and Honda has an excellent overall record for reliability. The fit and finish of the Insight is good, but some of the materials in the cabin don't feel as if they've been pulled from the top quality shelf.

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Safety & security ★★★★★

Every model in the range is fitted with front, side and curtain airbags, plus traction and stability control. Remote central locking is also standard in all trim levels, along with an alarm, locking wheel nuts and an integrated stereo.

IN THE CABIN

Behind the wheel ★★★★★

The Insight's futuristic dashboard is fairly user-friendly, but smaller drivers may find that the steering wheel obstructs the digital speedo. The two-part rear screen is a much bigger visibility issue; it's just as well that the large door mirrors give a good view of what's behind.



Space & practicality ★★★★★

The Insight has acres of legroom for those in both the front and back seats and the flat floor gives plenty of space for feet in the back. Its sleek, low shape means that headroom isn't generous, however, particularly in the back. The boot is rather shallow, but it's larger than a Focus's and has a handy underfloor compartment.

Equipment ★★★★★

Base SE trim is good, with climate control, alloy wheels, electric windows and door mirrors, and steering wheel-mounted controls. ES cars have cruise control, automatic headlights and wipers, heated front seats, steering-wheel gearshift paddles and a plug for your MP3 player. EST models have sat-nav and are also the only ones to get Bluetooth for your mobile as standard.

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