

# First drive

Nice price, but the new Honda Insight won't appeal to all

## The UK's cheapest hybrid

### HONDA INSIGHT

Hybrid cars have a reputation for being expensive – especially given that fuel savings over a similar diesel car may be relatively small.

Honda aims to change that with the Insight – a rival to the Toyota Prius, but costing from £15,490 instead of the Prius' £18,370.

That alone should make this Honda a hit, but be aware there's a new Prius on the way in the summer, and the Insight is not without flaws.

It's adopted the split rear windscreen seen in Honda's Civic hatchback. This hampers rear visibility and annoys Civic owners (as our postbag shows). That aside, it's decent-looking, with OK rear space and a practical 350-litre boot.

There's a 1.3 petrol engine alongside an electric motor, claiming a total power output of 100bhp (similar to a typical 1.6 petrol). It's smooth on the road, and the 'Eco Assist' dash computer reminds you that driving the Insight is all about eking



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out miles to the gallon (this is strangely entertaining). We're fully testing it soon, but our first impression is that it's more efficient than the costlier Civic Hybrid.



Honda claims overall fuel economy of 61.4 to 64.2mpg, depending on which model you choose, while CO2 output varies from 101 to 105g/km. It's a shame that it didn't beat 100g/km to qualify for free road tax, but a £15 tax disc saves about £130 a year over a typical 1.6 petrol hatchback.

New drop-top costs £2,000 more than a Mini hatchback

## Conversion costs

### MINI CONVERTIBLE

It's taken BMW a while to get round to chopping the roof off the latest Mini – the hatchback went on sale at the end of 2006. Until now, the Mini Convertible has been based on the first-generation BMW Mini, which lags behind the latest car for comfort and fuel economy.

Get behind the wheel of the new convertible, though, and it feels worth the wait. Its pin-sharp handling and lively engine (we drove the most powerful Cooper S model, from £18,845) are a joy.



Fuel economy, claimed to be 44.1mpg in the Cooper S, is 10mpg better than the previous version, thanks to a new 1.6 petrol engine and BMW's Efficient Dynamics fuel-saving tweaks.

The boot's still small but is now easier to access, while the new roll bars 'pop up' when needed (ie if the car rolls over), whereas they used to be permanent fixtures.

The fabric roof can be partially or fully opened, depending on how much of a tan you're after, while air-con and parking sensors are standard.

**VERDICT** The Mini Convertible is great fun, but all versions cost at least £2,000 more than hatchback counterparts.

They'll hold their value well, but with prices from £15,870 to £24,825, the cost of some Mini drop-tops now edge into Audi TT territory.

## This month

For our latest first drive reviews, visit [www.which.co.uk/cars](http://www.which.co.uk/cars) throughout the month. You can view video reports and test drives for several new models, and read our full first impressions.



### Geneva Motor Show

Visit [www.which.co.uk/geneva](http://www.which.co.uk/geneva) to watch videos of the latest car launches from March's Geneva Motor Show, including the BMW Gran Turismo, Fiat 500C drop-top and new Toyota Prius.

### Mitsubishi Evo X

It may not be the best car for these frugal times, but the Mitsubishi Lancer Evo X will put a smile on the face of most drivers. Watch us test this rally-bred car for the road in our exclusive online video.



### Ford Fiesta Econetic

Ford's new Fiesta impressed us, and is one of the few cars beating this year's sales gloom. The Econetic is the most fuel-efficient Fiesta, but is the £12,440 list price too steep? Find out online.



### Seat Exeo

Seat's new family saloon is another car that could do well. It's based on the previous generation Audi A4 (but from a reasonable £17,610). It's on sale in May, but we get behind the wheel this month – visit [www.which.co.uk/cars](http://www.which.co.uk/cars) for our first impressions.

