

Toyota Prius Celebrates 14 Years of Fuel Sipping with a Special Edition

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They grow up fast. It's hard to believe it has been 14 years since the first-generation Prius appeared in your early-adopter neighbor's driveway. A decade and a half and more than four million satisfied customers later, the 2015 Prius has gone mainstream and joined the popular crowd. And unlike a typical teenager, its appetite has never been smaller.

Toyota is celebrating Prius' coming of age with a special edition for 2015. It's available in two exclusive colors, Absolutely Red and Blizzard Pearl, accentuated by 17-inch wheels with a unique dark metal finish. In addition to all the standard equipment in the Prius Three trim level, the Special Edition features an interior trimmed with black SofTex® seats and dark gray stitching, blue front footwell illumination, and darkchrome accents on the door grips, steering wheel and shifter bezels. Side mirrors include turn signals.

Iconic design and high fuel economy fulfilling the promise of hybrids helped make the Toyota Prius synonymous with gas/electric vehicles. What began as a single model more than 14 years ago is now a model line that also includes the larger Prius v, the city-friendly Prius c and the Prius Plug-in Hybrid.

For 2015, Toyota also offers hybrid versions of the Camry and Avalon sedans and the Highlander SUV. (The Lexus luxury brand offers a further six hybrids, the most in the luxury category.) The Prius family alone accounts for over 40 percent of total hybrid vehicle sales volume in the U.S.

50 MPG Combined EPA Fuel Economy, Midsize Room

At 176.4 inches from bumper to bumper, the Prius can slip into "compact only" parking spaces, yet because of its interior roominess (93.7 cu. ft. passenger cabin and 21.6 cu. ft. trunk), Prius is classified as a midsize car by the EPA. A 106.3-inch wheelbase helps to give the Prius a smooth ride.

Yet, the numbers that people usually associate with the Prius are even more impressive: the EPA estimate fuel economy ratings of 51 MPG city / 48 MPG highway / 50 MPG combined.

The Prius Look

Prius stands apart from everything else on the road. The sleek, arc-shaped profile and sharp-edged details catch the eye, but not much of the wind. The car's 0.25 coefficient of drag (Cd) is one of the lowest for any production car in the world, a contributing factor in the high fuel economy. It's not the only thing that's low. Vehicle weight is kept low through use of aluminum for the hood, rear hatch, front stabilizer bar and brake calipers and by using super high-tensile strength steel in the inner rocker panel, center pillar and roof reinforcement. The 3,042-lb. curb weight is comparable to compact cars with less room, and it also helps make the Prius an agile machine. LEDs (light emitting diodes), optional in low beam headlamps and standard in DRLs and tail lamp clusters, help reduce the vehicle's power consumption.

The sleek shape does not compromise interior comfort. Rear headroom, at 37.6 inches, is actually slightly more than in the Toyota Corolla. And rear seat legroom, at 36.0 inches, is on par with some midsize sedans.

The cockpit likewise has a futuristic look and feel, from the curvy dashboard to the centrally located digital instrument and information displays. With the standard Multi-information Display panel, you can monitor the vehicle's fuel and battery energy, and also use a display that coaches economical driving habits.

In line with the future theme is the Touch Tracer Display. Touch sensors on the steering wheel switches are designed to reduce driver eye movement for better concentration on the road. When you touch the steering wheel controls, a duplicate image is displayed on the instrument panel, directly in line of sight. Yet, there's nothing complicated about the controls, which are all easy to reach and use.

Hybrid Synergy Drive

So, how do you get a 3,000-lb. car that can accelerate from zero-to-60 mph in under 10 seconds to also have a

50-MPG combined fuel economy rating? It's called Hybrid Synergy Drive, which combines the output of a 1.8-liter Atkinson-cycle, 4-cylinder engine with an electric motor.

The system's combined 134 net system horsepower feels even stronger to the driver due to the unique way the system combines the torque of the gasoline engine and electric motor through a planetary-type continuously variable transmission. A full hybrid, the Prius can run on the gasoline engine alone, battery alone, or a combination of both. The Prius feels responsive in all driving situations, and powertrain quietness is another benefit revered by loyal owners.

The magic isn't all in the powertrain. The Prius employs a number of special features to squeeze maximum efficiency out of every gallon of regular-grade gas. The electric water pump and electric power steering use no accessory drive belts, potentially reducing maintenance costs.

Regenerative braking helps to recapture electrical energy under deceleration, sending it to the battery, which helps to reduce fuel consumption.

An exhaust heat recirculation system reduces heat waste by warming engine coolant during cold startup. That helps reduce emissions and has the added benefit of getting heat to the cabin more quickly.

And, there's more. The Prius driver can take charge of the driving experience by selecting from among four driving modes, Normal, POWER, ECO and EV. Not surprisingly, they're pretty much self-explanatory. POWER mode increases sensitivity to throttle input for a sportier feel; ECO mode helps drivers enhance fuel economy by adjusting throttle input and climate control. In EV mode, the Prius can drive on battery power alone at low speeds for about a mile. That's useful for navigating a large parking lot or garage, for example.

There's an environmental benefit to driving a Prius besides the high fuel economy. The Prius is certified as a Super Ultra Low Emission Vehicle (SULEV) and an Advanced Technology Partial Zero Emissions Vehicle (AT-PZEV) in California and in states applying California emission standards. The AT-PZEV certification requires the SULEV exhaust standard linked with the ability to meet a zero-fuel-evaporative standard, a 150,000-mile durability demonstration, extended emissions system warranty, and technology deemed by the California Air Resources Board (CARB) to advance future fuel cell vehicles. In the rest of the country, Prius is certified as Tier 2, Bin 3.

Even the way Toyota builds the Prius eases pressure on the environment.

Plant-derived, carbon-neutral plastics are used in the seat cushion foam, cowl side trim, inner and outer scuff plates and deck trim cover. Ecological plastic emits less CO₂ during the production process than conventional plastic, and it also helps reduce petroleum use.

Making the Grade

Toyota offers the 2015 Prius in four model grades — Prius Two, Three, Four and Five – each of which adds more standard amenities and user technology. The Prius Two gets things started off nicely with standard tilt/telescopic steering wheel with controls for audio, climate, the multi-information display and Bluetooth® hands free phone function; automatic climate control with dust and pollen filter; Smart Key system on the driver's door with push button start and remote illuminated entry and Display Audio.

The Prius Three and Four models offer as an option the world's first sliding glass moonroof packaged with solar panels, which are located over the rear seating area. These power a ventilation system that helps reduce the interior air temperature when the car is parked in the sun. The available remote air conditioning system lets the driver lower the interior temperature before entering the car.

Advanced Multi-Media Systems – Would You Expect Anything Less?

The Prius shines when it comes to multi-media delivery. The Prius Two features a standard Display Audio touch-screen system with a 6.1-inch screen and integrated backup camera display. The AM/FM CD player unit offers MP3/WMA playback capability with six speakers, a USB port for iPod® connectivity, Bluetooth hands-free phone capability and audio streaming, and an auxiliary input jack.

The display also provides vehicle information and allows the driver to customize vehicle settings. The Prius Three adds navigation and opens up a world of multi-media possibilities with the Toyota Entune® App Suite. This system also integrates a backup camera display, SiriusXM Satellite Radio capability, HD Radio™ with iTunes® Tagging, and advanced voice recognition.

The Toyota Entune App Suite is a collection of popular mobile applications and subscription-free data services. Once a compatible smartphone is paired to the vehicle using Bluetooth or a USB cable, Entune apps are operated using the vehicle's controls or, for some services, by voice recognition. Entune offers apps for Bing™, iHeartRadio, MovieTickets.com, OpenTable®, and Pandora®. Entune data services include a fuel price guide, sports scores, stocks, traffic and weather.

Prius Four and Five include that system plus eight JBL® GreenEdge™ speakers and an 8-channel JBL amplifier. GreenEdge technology reduces electric draw on the vehicle, which can help enhance fuel economy. When the Deluxe Solar Roof Package is ordered for the Prius Four, or the Advanced Technology Package on Prius Five, that top Entune system is further upgraded with a Head-Up Display and Premium HDD Navigation System, which uses a seven-inch touch-screen with split-screen capability.

Safety Star

An IIHS Top Safety Pick four years running, the Prius is equipped with front and rear side curtain airbags, driver and passenger front seat-mounted side airbags and a driver's knee airbag. Active headrests are used in both front seats to help reduce the possibility of whiplash injury in certain types of rear collisions.

The Toyota Star Safety System™ includes an Anti-lock Brake System (ABS), Electronic Brake-force Distribution (EBD), Brake Assist (BA), Traction Control (TRAC), enhanced Vehicle Stability Control (VSC) and the Smart Stop Technology brake-override system.

The top-of-line Prius Five model's Advanced Technology Package includes Dynamic Radar Cruise Control, Pre-Collision System, Lane Keep Assist and Safety Connect. Also available, the Safety Connect telematics system includes automatic collision notification, stolen vehicle locator, emergency assistance button (SOS) and roadside assistance (1-year trial subscription included).

The Pre-Collision System is designed to help reduce crash speed and damage in certain frontal collisions only. It retracts the front seatbelts and applies the brakes in certain conditions when it determines that a frontal crash is unavoidable. Lane Keep Assist is designed to help the driver stay within the center of the lane. Equipped with this system, the Prius earned a Top Safety Pick+ rating from IIHS.

Limited Warranty

Toyota's 36-month/36,000 mile basic new-vehicle warranty applies to all components other than normal wear and maintenance items. Additional 60-month warranties cover the powertrain for 60,000 miles and against corrosion with no mileage limitation. The hybrid-related components, including the HV battery, battery control module, hybrid control module and inverter with converter, are covered for eight years/100,000 miles. In applicable states hybrid-related component coverage is 15 years/150,000 miles with the exception of the hybrid

battery, which is covered for 10 years/150,000 miles.

The Prius also comes standard with Toyota Care, a complimentary plan covering normal factory-scheduled maintenance and 24-hour roadside assistance for two years or 25,000 miles, whichever comes first.

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