

RAV4 Has Great Design Touches, Clever Features

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a good sized trunk; so it is functional, too.

As with most cars these days, the middle of the dashboard has a big infotainment system screen, which depending on trim, will either have a built in navigation system, or one that'll need to be paired with your phone.

I personally really liked the look and feel of the interior, there are great design touches – such as the climate control knobs, and rubberized door grabs. I also liked that the two models I drove – Trail and Limited – has heated and cooled seats, and a heated steering wheel; this vehicle is built for the Canadian climate.

Powertrain: There will be two powertrain options for the 2019 RAV4, a gas-electric hybrid (which will go on sale around next spring, and will discuss at a later date in detail), and a regular gasoline engine model – which I got to test!

It has a 2.5L, four-cylinder engine that features double over head cams, and variable valve timing with electronically driven intake and exhaust cams. End result is the most powerful naturally aspirated four-cylinder motor found on any current SUV/CUV, pushing out 203 hp (@ 6,600



rpm) and 184 lb-ft of torque (@ 5,000 rpm). Power is routed to either just the front wheels (FWD LE and XLE trim), or all wheels (AWD LE, XLE, Trail, and Limited trim) via an eight-speed automatic transmission. The gear ratios on this transmission are so close, that it feels like a CVT, even though it isn't one.

Driving Dynamics: As you'd expect, this is not a thrill machine! The RAV4 has never been an extreme type of SUV, its purpose in life has been that of being

a soft, daily user friendly vehicle that people would use for school runs, trips to the grocery store, and the office.

It has never been a vehicle you'd go find the most challenging back roads with, or find some truly rugged terrain! The 2019 RAV4 is not much different, but thanks to its drive modes - which includes an off-road mode, and hill decent, it can handle the rough stuff better than most such SUVs, especially if you opt for the Trail trim.

If you feel like exercising all the 203 horses under the hood, than it'll be best to engage 'Sport' mode, which holds each gear longer, but honestly, you'll try that for 30 seconds, and switch to either the 'Normal' or 'Eco' setting.

Fuel Economy: In 'Eco' mode, you'll achieve the best fuel economy figures! According to Toyota, the new RAV4 will achieve a city and highway average of 7.8 L/100 km for the FWD model, and 8.3 L/100 km for the AWD models. I didn't get to conduct

my own real-world fuel economy tests on the day I drove the 2019 RAV4, but will hopefully get to do that at a later date.

Pricing: Base price for the 2019 RAV4 is \$27,990 (FWD LE) and the top of the line (AWD Limited) model will set you back \$40,690. Compared to the 2018 model RAV4, the 2019 model is more expensive, but it gives more in terms of equipment, too.

Verdict: The 2019 Toyota RAV4 has matured into a very nice vehicle. It looks better than before, the interior seems to be lifted out of a much more expensive luxury vehicle, and on the road it is smooth and quiet. Couple that with adaptive cruise control, lane-keep assist, and all the other clever features that are part of the 'Toyota Safety Sense 2.0' system, and you've got a vehicle that is easy to drive, and easy to live with on a daily basis. While it is not a thrill machine, it will do your everyday chores with ease.

Like all Toyota products, it is also built very well, which means that it'll last for a very long time; plus you can take pride that it is built by a hard working local team from TMMC in Woodstock, Ontario – which alone is a great reason for considering the new RAV4.

Five Ways To Improve Your Car's Fuel Economy

The onset of colder temperatures and poor weather conditions bring about many challenges for drivers, including a negative impact on a car's fuel economy. While gas may be an unavoidable expense at this time of year, here are some tips and tricks you can apply to get the most mileage out of every drop of fuel.

"When it comes to fuel consumption, more important than what you drive is how you drive," explains Michael Bettencourt, managing editor at Autotrader.ca.

"A little preparation and foresight can go a long way in setting yourself up for some great savings."

Curb unnecessary braking and pedal power. When driving, read the road and gauge the traffic ahead to keep momentum and avoid needless deceleration. Aggressive acceleration can also eat up a lot of fuel, so be mindful of how hard your engine is working and apply smooth, gentle pressure when getting up to speed.

Avoid idling. Avoid idling when possible. Once you have



adequate visibility, the best way to warm your vehicle is to drive it. Make sure you turn off the en-

gine when parked, and skip the drive thru.

Watch your weight. Remove

heavy items from your vehicle, including ski or luggage racks when not in use to improve aerodynamics and reduce drag.

Where rubber meets road. Ensure tires have adequate tread depth and are properly inflated, as under-inflated tires use more fuel. Team effort. Carpooling is a great way to stretch your budget by splitting fuel costs and as a bonus, it gives you access to HOV lanes for a smoother ride. Find more information at www.autotrader.ca/newsfeatures.

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