

# Quiet, smooth, and economical: Living with Toyota's hybrid Corolla Hatchback

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The Toyota Corolla almost needs no introduction. This vehicle is well-known and performs well sales-wise. In 2019 the hatchback models of the Toyota Corolla became known as the Toyota Corolla Hatchback, leaving behind the legacy names of Conquest, RunX, and Auris. The Corolla Hatchback got a cool addition to its lineup late last year. This addition is the Corolla Hatch Hybrid which comes in three different hybrid derivatives. I tested the Corolla Hatch 1.8 Xr Hybrid Bi-tone for a week and here are my thoughts on it.





## **A little bit about how the Corolla Hatch Hybrid works**

Like with most hybrid vehicles, the Corolla Hatch Hybrid uses its electric motor to power it when pulling away and switches to its engine as a throttle response for more output. The system employed in this car cleverly toggles between the power sources and always knows when to use the electric motor for fuel preservation. This is not revolutionary, obviously, but the efficiency with which the Corolla Hatch Hybrid makes use of the technology is great.

Further on the topic of fuel preservation, driving the Corolla Hatch Hybrid in places like parking lots, driveways, and narrow roads is enjoyable for two reasons: the drive is quiet and smooth, and no fuel is used, unlike normal cars that chug on the fuel in lower gears.

But because the drive is so quiet in places like this, there's a potential safety drawback that perhaps applies to all vehicles that are not ICE powered. Nearby pedestrians can't hear the car, which could be dangerous.

Aside from its intelligent hybrid system though, the Corolla Hatch Hybrid also has regenerative braking. A good way to charge up the electric battery as it's a non-plug-in hybrid.

## **What my time with the Corolla Hatch Hybrid was like**

As a family man of four, I take into consideration how well my wife and children are accommodated in test cars. There's of course a bias to this as larger cars like SUVs will be more to their liking, but it's still a good way to gauge how good some hatchbacks and sedans are when it comes to comfort and space.

So with the Corolla Hatch Hybrid, there's enough just space for someone of my height at 1.8m to be seated at the back without your knees against the seat in front of you, regardless of the positioning of the seat. For two toddlers, the space at the back is enough but I imagine with three small occupants it can feel a tad cramped.

The driver's and passenger seats are nice and comfortable although there's an air of confinement for legroom and headroom. Overall, Corolla Hatch Hybrid does a well enough job to provide comfort and space.







Talking about comfort, the Hatch Hybrid is remarkably smooth and quiet with a refined driving experience. This is thanks to its suspension, steering, and hybrid system that executes less noise than an ICE engine.

There's also enough power to keep up with traffic. Because the engines work in unison, there really isn't a time when you feel that you aren't keeping up with the cars ahead of you. But, on an incline, you will feel the car working a bit harder and you will notice that refinement just slightly lose its touch. The CVT transmission performed nicely though, and I found myself not being annoyed at the seamless gear switching.

When it comes to fuel efficiency it's a no-brainer that the Hatch Hybrid can save fuel. I experimented with it a bit and found that a figure of 4l per 100km is easily achievable if you drive in a manner that allows for the battery to power the car for half of the time.

## **Safety**

The Hatch Hybrids come equipped with Toyota Safety Sense 3.0, which comprises of semi-autonomous driving aids. Intelligent Clearance Sonar (ICS) is fitted as standard. It also has blind spot monitoring with Safe Exit Assist.

## **Features**

The Xr model on test had a new generation system with voice recognition, wireless Apple CarPlay, Android Auto and built-

in navigation functionality. Also available is different display modes and design.

The Xr sports comes with 18-inch alloy wheels (with 225-40-R18 rubber). There's also wireless, USB chargers including Type-C format.

Powering our test model was a 1.8-litre petrol-electric hybrid powertrain that produces 90kw and 142Nm of torque, with the electric motoring offering a 14% increase in power. The engines are matched to a CVT transmission.

## Price

The Corolla Hatch 1.8 Xr Hybrid costs R538,800.

All Corolla Hatch models are sold with a six-services/90,000km service plan (intervals set at 15,000 km).

Petrol models carry a three-year/100,00km warranty, while hybrid models hold an eight-year/195,000,km warranty plan. Service and warranty plan extensions can also be purchased from any Toyota dealer (220 outlets).

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