

Road Test

We conduct more than 50 tests on each vehicle at our 327-acre Auto Test Center. For complete road tests, go to CR.org/cars.



Geeked-Out Green Machine

With its plug-in power and tablet-like center display, the Prius Prime is a hybrid tailor-made for gadget lovers.

THE PRIUS PRIME is the ultimate Prius for drivers who want a fully electric vehicle for in-town trips but also the flexibility to take longer journeys without range anxiety. It can drive 22.5 miles on electric power when fully charged. Beyond that, it transitions to normal hybrid operation using its gasoline engine in combination with a battery-powered electric motor for an impressive 590 miles of total range. In hybrid mode, the Prime gets 50 mpg overall, 2 mpg less than the regular Prius.

The battery recharges in

5 hours on standard 120-volt power, eliminating the need for a garage-wall charger that can cost hundreds or more to install. On electric power, the Prime runs nearly silently and provides a quick initial takeoff, but fires up the engine when circumstances demand. Like the Prius, the Prime serves up a comfortable, steady ride and sound, reflexive handling.

The sci-fi-looking cabin is a mix of hard plastic and soft surfaces. On top trims, a large tablet-like touch screen hosts the controls for the audio system, trip information, phone, and navigation. The screen looks stunning but can be infuriating to use. Controls for such common tasks as changing radio stations are hidden, while navigation and phone controls are easy to see. The front seats are supportive, but the rear seats are designed for only two riders. Forward-collision warning and automatic emergency braking are standard across the line.

COMPACT HYBRIDS

Toyota Prius Prime

OVERALL SCORE **73**

ROAD-TEST SCORE **74**

HIGHS

Fuel economy, no range anxiety, standard advanced safety gear, tax incentives

LOWS

Complex infotainment screen, 4-seat only, shifter, less luggage space than Prius

POWERTRAIN

121-hp, 1.8-liter four-cylinder hybrid engine; continuously variable transmission; front-wheel drive

FUEL

133 MPGe[†]/50 mpg[®]

PRICE AS TESTED

\$29,889



Shockingly Good

A lot of power in a small package makes the Chevrolet Bolt a game-changer in the electric car market.

IT USED TO BE that admirers of electric cars who wanted a 200-miles-plus range had to get in line for a Tesla and spend upward of \$70,000. The new Bolt changes all that.

At the heart of the Bolt is a large 60-kWh battery pack sitting under its floor, helping it to achieve a 250-mile cruising range in our tests. With pricing starting around \$37,000 (before tax incentives), it costs far less than any Tesla on sale today.

The Bolt is fun to drive, to boot. With 200 (electrified) horsepower, this hatchback accelerates from 0-60 mph

in just 6.8 seconds.

The Bolt's heavy, low-mounted battery allows the car to turn easily and with confidence. But be warned: The ride can get choppy on uneven pavement.

It takes a long time to charge that big battery. In our tests, it took 10 hours on a 240-volt connector to charge from empty. (There's an optional DC fast-charging capability that promises up to 90 miles of range with 30 minutes of charging.) Most drivers won't need that for daily use because of the Bolt's long range and easy nightly charging at home.

We're not fans of the front seats—the lack of support reminded us of a vinyl lawn chair. The gear selector moves in an unusual 7-shaped pattern, which makes it tricky to put the Bolt in Reverse.

Those minor complaints aside, if you ever thought about going electric, you'd be nuts not to consider the Bolt.

COMPACT ELECTRICS

Chevrolet Bolt

OVERALL SCORE **70**

ROAD-TEST SCORE **76**

HIGHS

Long range for an EV, acceleration, agility, quietness

LOWS

Charging times, brake-pedal feel, ride, seat comfort, gear selector

POWERTRAIN

200-hp electric; 1-speed direct drive; front-wheel drive

RANGE/CHARGE TIME

250 miles/10 hrs. to charge on 240 volts

PRICE AS TESTED

\$43,155



No Hybrid Hero

The Kia Niro will tempt the crossover crowd, but it lacks the fuel economy and driving dynamics to seal the deal.

THANKS TO its high stance, conservative styling, and automatic transmission (rather than a CVT), the Niro is a genre-splitting hybrid that combines fuel economy with versatility. It has the same drivetrain as its sibling hybrid—the Hyundai Ioniq—but also some of its relative’s shortcomings.

When compared with wagons and small SUVs, the Niro’s 43 mpg overall is impressive. But it falls 9 mpg shy of the fuel-economy champs, the Toyota Prius and the Ioniq, because of its extra weight and height.

In the race to 60 mph,

the Niro tied the Ioniq at 9.9 seconds. It can suffer from a delay when accelerating from a complete stop. And any attempt to rush it is punctuated by a noisy transition from electric drive to gasoline engine.

The Niro shares the Ioniq’s handling traits: Both were unimpressive in our avoidance maneuver. The Niro’s ride can get choppy, and braking performance is mediocre.

The mostly basic interior features a few nice touches. The manual cloth-and-leather front seats look attractive, but they’re not that comfortable, in part because they lack any lumbar adjustment. The driving position is roomy and upright like a small SUV, and the rear seat offers ample space and soft cushions.

The controls and 7-inch infotainment system are a breeze to use. Forward-collision warning and automatic emergency braking are optional, but only on mid- and upper-level trims.

COMPACT HYBRIDS

Kia Niro

OVERALL SCORE **65**

ROAD-TEST SCORE **65**

HIGHS

Fuel economy, cargo versatility, controls

LOWS

Braking, agility, hesitation off the line, front-seat comfort, ride

POWERTRAIN

139-hp, 1.6-liter four-cylinder hybrid engine; 6-speed dual-clutch automatic transmission; front-wheel drive

FUEL

43 mpg

PRICE AS TESTED

\$26,805



Going the Distance

The Hyundai Ioniq is in the race to be the best hybrid. But its poor braking and mundane driving experience keep it from being a contender.

THE IONIQ is the latest challenger to the Toyota Prius, the revolutionary hybrid that remains unrivaled for its combination of fuel economy, practicality, and reliability. The Ioniq hybrid version can drive briefly on electric power alone. (A full electric model is currently sold only in California, and a plug-in hybrid is coming this fall.)

The Ioniq matches the Prius with a stunning 52 mpg overall. And like the Prius, it has an aerodynamic and versatile hatchback design.

But the Ioniq is no joy to

drive. Its dual-clutch automatic transmission elicits less engine noise than the continuously variable transmissions found in many hybrids, but the shifts could be smoother. In addition, the Ioniq is hesitant to accelerate.

Its handling borders on clumsy, requiring more steering input than its peers when making turns. The ride isn’t as comfortable as in the Prius, either. Unusually long braking distances, especially on wet surfaces, hurt the Ioniq’s road-test score. Also, we’d feel better if the car came standard with automatic emergency braking, but this feature is available only on the top two trims.

The straightforward controls are user-friendly. Our midlevel SEL came with a fully powered driver’s seat, including two-way lumbar support adjustment. The rear seat is a bit snug on headroom, and the two-piece back window reduces visibility.

COMPACT HYBRIDS

Hyundai Ioniq

OVERALL SCORE **66**

ROAD-TEST SCORE **67**

HIGHS

Fuel economy, hatchback versatility, controls

LOWS

Braking, agility, hesitation off the line, no rear wiper

POWERTRAIN

139-hp, 1.6-liter four-cylinder hybrid engine; 6-speed dual-clutch automatic transmission; front-wheel drive

FUEL

52 mpg

PRICE AS TESTED

\$25,035

Ratings > **Electrified Cars** To maximize energy efficiency, these cars run on pure electricity or are hybrids that combine a gasoline engine with an electric drive and battery.



Recommended	Make & Model	Price	Overall Score	Survey Results		Safety	Road-Test Results												
				Predicted Reliability	Owner Satisfaction		Front-Crash Prevention	Road-Test Score	Efficiency	MPG While Running on Gas Engine	MPG Equivalent (MPGe)	Acceleration, 0-60 MPH, Sec.	Dry Braking, 60-0 MPH, Ft.	Avoidance-Maneuver Speed, MPH	Routine Handling	Ride	Noise	Seat Comfort, Front/Rear	Controls
COMPACT ELECTRIC CARS AND HYBRIDS																			
✓	Toyota Prius Three	\$27,323	77	✓	✓	Std./✓	75	52	—	10.3	135	53.5	✓	✓	✓	↓ / ↓	✓	2+2	
✓	Ford C-Max Hybrid SE	\$26,685	73	↓	✓	NA	77	37	—	8.4	138	53.0	✓	✓	✓	✓ / ✓	↓	3+0	
✓	Toyota Prius Prime Premium	\$29,889	73	✓	✓	Std./✓	74	50	133	10.8	139	55.0	✓	✓	✓	✓ / ↓	↓	2+0	
✓	Ford C-Max Energi	\$34,940	73	↓	✓	NA	77	37	94	8.1	136	50.5	✓	✓	✓	✓ / ✓	↓	1+1	
✓	Toyota Prius V Three	\$28,217	71	✓	✓	Opt.	73	41	—	10.7	138	55.0	↓	✓	↓	✓ / ✓	✓	3+1	
✓	BMW i3 Giga REx	\$50,450	71	↓	↓	Opt.	79	29	139	7.5	131	55.0	✓	✓	✓	✓ / ↓	↓	1+1	
✓	Chevrolet Bolt Premier	\$43,155	70	↓	✓	Opt.	76	—	119	6.8	138	53.0	✓	↓	✓	↓ / ↓	✓	2+0	
	Hyundai Ioniq SEL	\$25,035	66	↓	✓	Opt.	67	52	—	9.9	144	51.5	↓	✓	↓	✓ / ↓	✓	3+0	
	Kia Niro EX	\$26,805	65	↓	✓	Opt.	65	43	—	9.9	143	51.0	↓	↓	↓	↓ / ✓	✓	2+2	
	Toyota Prius C Two	\$20,850	63	✓	✓	Std./✓	55	43	—	11.3	135	51.5	↓	↓	↓	✓ / ↓	✓	1+1	
	Nissan Leaf S	\$29,860	62	✓	↓	NA	71	—	106	10.3	136	52.5	✓	✓	✓	✓ / ↓	✓	2+1	
	Chevrolet Volt LT	\$35,890	54	↓	✓	Opt.	70	38	105	8.0	133	52.5	↓	✓	✓	↓ / ↓	✓	2+0	
	Ford Focus Electric	\$40,990	52	↓	↓	NA	76	—	107	10.2	140	52.5	✓	✓	✓	✓ / ↓	✓	1+1	
	Mitsubishi i-MiEV SE	\$33,630	44	↓	↓	NA	35	—	111	14.7	132	52.0	↓	↓	↓	↓ / ↓	↓	1+1	

HOW WE TEST: Recommended models did well in our Overall Score, which factors in Road-Test Results, Predicted Reliability, Owner Satisfaction, and Safety, which includes crash-test results

and the availability of Front-Crash Prevention features, such as forward-collision warning and automatic emergency braking at city or highway speeds. For these systems, NA means

no such system is offered; Opt. means it's available on some versions but not necessarily on the one we tested; and models with standard systems are rated from ↓ to ✓ based on how many of

these features are standard. We now deduct points from the Overall Score if a vehicle's shifter is confusing, lacks fail-safes, or is difficult to operate. For full ratings, go to CR.org/cars.

Green Machines That Will Save You Greenbacks

Buy a fuel-efficient car today and save big tomorrow.

WITH GAS PRICES around the lowest they've been in years, shoppers have turned away from small and fuel-efficient cars in favor of big SUVs and trucks. But low sales lead to big incentives, which means a buyer who takes the long view (when gas prices rise again) can get a real steal right now on a

fuel-efficient car. "Prices are currently low, primarily thanks to a surplus in oil supply," says Patrick DeHaan, senior petroleum analyst for the GasBuddy website. He says that significant increases in U.S. shale-oil production, OPEC's reluctance to cut output, and a weakening overall

global demand helped create the glut. Still, we live in a volatile world, and recent history has shown the potential for significant swings in gasoline pricing. Despite that reality, DeHaan says his current forecast for gas prices follows a "lower for longer" model, with no significant increases

expected until mid-2018 or later. This promises to keep the market for SUVs red-hot, but it can also mean a buying opportunity for higher-mpg cars. Looking at the most fuel-efficient cars among CR's ratings, we find many selling at significant discounts off their sticker price, with savings in the

thousands of dollars. With these cars, you can save today and gain protection from potential (and likely) future gasoline price increases within the typical ownership period for a new car. For a full list of recommended fuel-efficient cars and SUVs, go to CR.org/fuel. —Nick Kurczewski