

Honda Redesigns Pilot

Three-Row SUV Gets Bigger, More Capable With New TrailSport

By Derek Price

CARGAZING.COM

The Honda Pilot has always delivered family-friendly transportation with rugged SUV styling, but not necessarily SUV capability.

That changes after a complete redesign for 2023.

Instead of being a more tough-looking version of the Odyssey — something it does even better this year with a bigger, boxier, square-shouldered shape — the new Pilot actually has some real capability baked in.

That's especially obvious in the new TrailSport version, the most capable off-road SUV Honda has created to date.

The TrailSport rides a full inch higher than the standard Pilot, allowing more ground clearance over challenging terrain from its suspension tuned for off-roading.

It also comes fitted with two things Honda has never offered before: standard all-terrain tires to help with grip off the pavement and thick steel skid plates to protect its underbody.

I haven't driven the standard version of the Pilot yet, but I was happy to find the suspension on my TrailSport tester wasn't too harsh or abrasive, a common problem on vehicles designed for the dirt.

The Pilot TrailSport



For the first time in its history, the Honda Pilot has a version designed for serious off-road capability from the factory. Called the TrailSport, its suspension is an inch higher than the standard trims.

comes with other useful features for off-roaders, including a TrailWatch system with four cameras that give the driver a clear, close-up view around the vehicle. It's great for seeing things outside the driver's field of vision, a safety feature that helps in driveways and garages as much as it does on trails.

It also has a Trail drive mode that uses both brake vectoring and torque vectoring to send power to whichever wheels still have traction. It's designed to smoothly, effortlessly get the Pilot out of sticky situations.

Orange accents in the cabin and on body badging catch the eye and set the TrailSport apart visually from its more road-friendly siblings.

While the TrailSport's aggressive off-road features are somewhat of a surprise from Honda, the rest of the Pilot's design is exactly what one would expect from this logical, practical Japanese brand.

Cup holders seem to be everywhere you look in the cabin — 14 in total — including roomy spaces in the door panels. Clearly this

still feels a bit cramped for adults, but it is easy to access thanks to second-row chairs that easily fold and slide forward.

It also has more cargo volume than ever before. There are 22.4 cubic feet available behind the third row, 60.1 behind the second row and a whopping 114.3 when you fold all the rear seats down.

If I could change one thing about the new Pilot, it would be the touchscreen size. Today's vehicles — especially SUVs and pickup trucks — are in an arms race to install the biggest, fastest, flashiest touchscreen interfaces they can. Sometimes that can feel like overkill, but the 7- and 9-inch screens in the new Pilot seem small compared to the competition.

Its driver assistance features, though, are spectacular. The Pilot's adaptive cruise control and lane-keeping systems do a good job making driving easy on well-marked roads, responding in a more natural-feeling way than before.

Pricing starts at \$36,300 for the base LX trim with two-wheel drive. The version I tested, the off-road-oriented TrailSport, starts at \$48,700.

Other versions include the Sport (\$39,500), EX-L (\$42,300), Touring (\$46,800) and range-topping Elite (\$52,380).

AT A GLANCE

What was tested? 2023 Honda Pilot AWD Transport (\$48,350). Options: Diffused sky paint (\$455). Price as tested (including \$1,345 destination charge): \$50,150

By The Numbers

Wheelbase: 113.8 in.
Length: 199.9 in.
Width: 78.5 in.
Height: 71 in.
Engine: 3.5-liter V6 (285 hp, 262 ft. lbs.)
Transmission: 10-speed automatic
Fuel economy: 18 city, 23 highway

RATINGS

Style: 8
Performance: 7
Price: 8
Handling: 7
Ride: 7
Comfort: 6
Quality: 9
Overall: 7

Why buy it? A complete redesign for 2023 makes the Pilot roomier and tougher looking than before. The new TrailSport package adds serious off-road credibility for the first time with skid plates, a lifted suspension and all-terrain tires.

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Cup holders seem to be everywhere you look in the cabin — 14 in total — including roomy spaces

in the door panels. Clearly this fourth-generation Pilot was designed with American drivers and their Big Gulp cups in mind, and it's assembled in a very fitting place: Alabama.

Every speck of space inside the Pilot appears to be designed for a purpose, too. Honda does a great job packaging interior volume to be as useful and airy as possible.

The new-for-2023 Pilot is bigger than last year's model. It's 3.4 inches longer, and you can feel that

space in the roomy first- and second-row seats. The third row still feels a bit cramped for adults, but it is easy to access thanks to second-row chairs that easily fold and slide forward.

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A CLOSER LOOK



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FACTS, FIGURES AND RATINGS

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