



First Fleet Camry Impresses Where It Counts

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The first new-generation Toyota Camry to join a UK leasing fleet has been acquired by successful newcomer Fleet Hire Ltd of Birmingham - and is being driven by the finance director of one of Britain's leading high-tech venture-management companies. Fleet Hire started operations in May 2001, based at Birmingham Business Park near the NEC, and already has a mixed fleet of 350 vehicles, mainly cars. "The new Camry 3.0-litre automatic is a big improvement on the last model," says Fleet Hire's Operations Director Bob Chamberlain. "For the luxury car market it's very competitive in terms of SMR costs and represents good value for money. It also comes under the tax-band threshold, so for a finance director it would certainly seem the right way to go!" This model has a list price of around £25,500 but feels like a more expensive car. I think it will have a good strong residual value too," says Bob. "With its new lines and style and cheaper SMR costs it's certainly far more acceptable now for contract-hire companies."

The Camry has also found an appreciative driver in Mary Martin, Finance Director for Birmingham's Forward Group, a leading venture-management team of technology professionals and entrepreneurs which invests in innovative ideas emerging from UK research institutions. Mary covers up to 30,000 miles a year. She has run two Camrys over the past four years and collected the latest model last month. "I live in the heart of the city but do a lot of motorway driving, so I want to be in a car which doesn't leave me feeling like a crumpled rag when I go into a meeting, and to feel safe," she says. "The Camry has been restyled to give more room and better visibility. The ride is smoother and it's altogether very well engineered."

"It's doing 30mpg on the motorway, which isn't bad considering it has a 3.0-litre engine. The new Camry is a very cost-effective car in terms of capital outlay and running costs compared with a BMW or a Mercedes." The Toyota Camry has been the best-selling saloon car in the USA for four years running, with more than five million sold there since launch. Powered by either 2.4-litre VVT-i or 3.0-litre V6 engines, the new model is designed to offer a precisely engineered balance of ride, comfort and performance. The 2.4 manual gives class-leading combined fuel consumption of 32.8mpg and CO2 emissions of 206g/km and 0-62mph acceleration in 9.4 seconds. Bigger but more streamlined than its predecessor, it also offers class-leading interior space and a higher level and quality of standard equipment than before, yet prices start at under £20,000. Luxury equipment includes automatic headlamp control; rain-sensitive windscreen wipers; automatic air-conditioning; full leather interior on CDX models and, on 3.0-litre V6 models, an optional DVD-based navigation system. "Few cars in the demanding upper-medium executive market enjoy such volume sales as the Camry does in the USA, so Camry drivers in the UK benefit from a level of investment which European rivals can't match," says Toyota Fleet's General Manager Jon Pollock. "The positive response of Fleet Hire and of a discerning customer reinforces our confidence that the new Camry will prove a popular executive choice."

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