



Toyota Prius: 10 Years At The Top

17 December 2007

Prius celebrates its 10th anniversary this month and a decade during which it has pushed the boundaries of automotive innovation and set benchmarks in low emissions and fuel economy that Toyota's rivals are still struggling to match.

Even though Prius has pioneered many new technologies, most notably its Toyota Hybrid System (THS) powertrain, it has proved enormously popular with motorists, thanks to its environmental credentials, versatility, ease of use and low running costs. It remains the world's cleanest family car, with carbon dioxide emissions of 104g/km, and has an official combined cycle fuel consumption figure of 65.7mpg.

Since the first generation model made its debut in Japan in 1997, around 900,000 Prius have been sold – more than 81,000 of these in Europe, where the car was launched in November 2000. The launch of an all-new Prius in 2004 raised public awareness and accelerated sales to the extent Toyota commissioned a new production centre in Changchun, China to cope with demand.

The UK remains an important market for Prius, with more than 16,000 first and second generation versions sold. Its public profile has been boosted by exemption from the London congestion charge and lower parking permit charges in some local authority areas, thanks to its low emissions performance. And Prius drivers are happier with their vehicle than owners of any other car, according to the 2007 J.D. Power and Associates UK Customer Satisfaction Survey, which named Prius the top-ranked individual model.

Unsurprisingly, Prius is the world's best-selling hybrid power vehicle and a standard bearer for Toyota's commitment to building cars that have a less harmful impact on the environment, from the manufacturing process, through customer ownership to final end-of-life disposal. Its revolutionary power system, which combines a small but powerful electric motor, a 1.5-litre petrol engine and a compact battery pack is reliable and robust, qualities reflected in the standard eight-year warranty on all the car's hybrid components.

And where Prius has led, others have followed: Toyota Motor Corporation has steadily expanded its hybrid model range to include SUVs, MPVs and luxury saloons in both its Toyota and Lexus ranges. Meanwhile other manufacturers are only just beginning to schedule their first hybrid volume production vehicles.

Prius achievements year by year

1997	The first generation Prius is launched in Japan on 15 December.
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1999	Prius wins its first International Engine of the Year award, a feat repeated in 2000.
2000	Prius goes on sale in the UK for the first time.
2002	Prius becomes the world's first hybrid vehicle to finish an FIA-sanctioned rally, completing the 8,000km Midnight Sun to Red Sea event.
2004	<p>The all-new second generation Prius is launched worldwide and is named 2005 European Car of the Year. It also wins the North American Car of the Year and International Engine of the Year titles and goes on to win IEOY awards every year up to and including 2007. In Euro NCAP crash testing, Prius is awarded the top five-star rating for adult passenger protection and four stars for child occupant protection with the highest points score then recorded.</p> <p>In November cumulative Prius sales pass a quarter of a million.</p> <p>In December Prius sets a new land speed record for hybrid power vehicles, achieving 130.794mph on the Bonneville Salt Flats in Utah.</p>
2005	A new production centre in Changchun, China, comes on stream at the end of the year to meet increased market demand for Prius.
2006	In June worldwide Prius sales reach the half million mark.
2007	Prius is the top-rated individual model in the 2007 J.D. Power and Associates UK Customer Satisfaction Awards. Toyota joins with energy firm EDF to evaluate the potential of plug-in hybrid vehicles, using Prius as a prototype in France.

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