

Big cabin, big economy

By Joe Sage

The first surprise when you get in the Honda Fit is its spaciousness. Atop a diminutive 99.6-inch wheelbase is a cabin with 93.8 cubic feet of passenger volume and 16.6 of cargo volume (or 52.7 with the rear "magic seats" down, almost completely flat). Compare this with 120.8 cu.ft. of passenger and 16.5 cu.ft. of cargo volume in a big Dodge Charger sedan. Or with 53.2 and 7.8 in a Smart car. The Fit's tidy package is sort of all-cabin, but with no loss of luggage space, and with its engine consuming only a very efficient volume.

That 1.5-liter engine does not create a race car, but it has plenty of go-power around town, easily getting us across busy multi-lane frontage road challenges or onto a freeway.

The top model EX-L (ours with Navi) comes only as an automatic—a continuously variable transmission (CVT). Lower LX and EX models offer a 6-speed manual option, although these have lower fuel mileage than the CVT. A base LX with CVT hits 41 MPG highway, tops in the lineup.

We had disappointing performance in Sport mode with the CVT, preferring regular Drive. CVTs can be programmed a number of ways, from straight-line acceleration to mimicking shift points. This one, in Sport mode, keeps

RPMs right around 2800-3000 all the time, which made shift points feel doggy instead of boosted.

Honda Fit launched in the US in 2006, and sales grew rapidly, peaking near 80,000 in 2008, then losing ground. Since a major 2013 reengineering—a new ultra-high-strength steel platform and restyling—it has rebounded to its highest numbers since 2009 (about 60,000 units for 2014).

Masterful third-gen styling keeps the car's spirit and brand equity—recognition is immediate—while every bit of it was completely modernized.

The 2015 Honda Fit has already earned honors as an Edmunds.com Top Rated Vehicle, an ALG Residual Value Award winner and an *Automobile* magazine All-Star. It rates a KBB.com Best Resale Value, is an IIHS Top Safety Pick and received a 5-Star Overall Vehicle Score from NHTSA. It was a finalist for Green Car of the Year (edged out by the more-than-double-the-price BMW i3 electric).

Honda always makes it easy to select a trim level. Our top-model Fit EX-L NAVI lacked little at its twenty-grand price point (two power seats and auto-down windows would be nice). The Honda Fit LX starts at just \$15,650 and the EX at \$17,560. All have the same nifty style, nimble handling, and useful and appealing layout. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE...1.5L DOHC 16-valve i-VTEC 4-cyl dir inject	
TRANSMISSION.....CVT (continuously variable)	
with sport mode and paddle shifters	
DRIVETRAIN.....FWD	
POWER/TORQUE.....130 hp / 114 lb-ft	
THROTTLE.....Drive-by-wire	
STEERING.....Electric power steering: rack & pinion	
TURNING CIRCLE.....35.1 ft	
SEATING CAPACITY.....5	
CARGO VOLUME.....16.6 cu ft (52.7 w seats down)	
WEIGHT.....2642 lb	
WEIGHT DISTRIBUTION.....61/39 front/rear	
FUEL CAPACITY.....10.6 gal	
MPG.....32/38/35 (city/hwy/comb)	

INCLUDED: SAFETY/TECH: Theft-deterrent system, front dual-stage airbags and side airbags, side curtain airbags w/ rollover sensor, ABS, brake assist, EBD, vehicle stability, cruise control, lane watch, child seat system, advanced body structure, LED taillights. **EXTERIOR:** Power moonroof w/ tilt, 16x6 alloy wheels, intermittent wipers, rear defroster and washer/wiper, auto headlights, heated mirrors w/ turn signals, fog lights, roofline spoiler, keyless entry. **INTERIOR:** Keyless start, leather-trimmed seats, leather-wrapped wheel, tilt/tele, heated front seats, 7-inch touchscreen audio-nav w/ voice recognition, rear camera, next-gen HondaLink w/ smartphone apps, 6-speaker audio, XM satellite, HD, Pandora, SMS text, Bluetooth, USB, wheel-mounted controls, filtered A/C, storage console/armrest, 60/40 rear seat, power windows, programmable locks, driver auto up/down window, driver adjustable-height seat,

BASE PRICE (EX-L NAVI).....\$20,800	
DESTINATION CHARGE:.....790	
TOTAL.....\$21,590	



Inside and out, the little Fit is a beauty. This no-cost Passion Berry Pearl paint job adds richness to this \$20,000 do-it-all subcompact.