

ARIZONA DRIVER

THE ENTHUSIAST'S GUIDE TO LIFE BEHIND THE WHEEL

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**ROAD TRIPS!
COMPARO EVENTS!
FALL AUCTION RESULTS & JANUARY INFO
TECH: HYDROGEN, COMFORT, COUNTERFEITING
HOT WHEELS LEGENDS
TRUCKS, EVS, SUVs, SEDANS
AZ511 TO PUERTO PEÑASCO
AND MUCH MORE!**

Toyota RAV4 Hybrid
Woodland Edition

VEHICLES • EQUIPMENT • TECHNOLOGY • PEOPLE • EVENTS • DESTINATIONS • ATTRACTIONS

Smaller Toyota takes a big trip

WIN-WIN: IT BOTH BENEFITS FROM AND BELIES ITS SIZE BY JOE SAGE

Toyota RAV4 has evolved from a tiny vehicle in the 1990s, growing a bit larger as tastes grew smaller, a combination that has led to compact SUVs and crossovers being the hottest segment in the marketplace—and RAV4 the top seller in this segment for six years running.

We were so impressed with the fifth generation RAV4 when we first drove it, completely transformed in style and substance, it went straight to our cover (November-December 2019). It seems to have been a big player in moving the whole industry into a new age of utilities that move away from an era of curvy lookalikes and return to a more utilitarian form. And the marketplace says yes.

We've driven a number of iterations of the gen-five RAV4 since its introduction. Our first had been of the RAV4 Adventure. And our most recent was a new RAV4 TRD Off-Road last spring, as our local wheels in Washington State during an event. Both have special trail capabilities built in (see last paragraph of sidebar on final page).

Here, we're driving a new, third trail version—the RAV4 Hybrid Woodland Edition (or Woodland Special Edition, in some references). This has its own advanced off-roading build, along with specific style points and added features. (See that same

final sidebar for full Woodland details.) Woodland Edition is a Hybrid only, moving it toward the 40 mpg range, though a little less than others due to its larger wheels and other additional content.

We knew this RAV4 would be special, so we planned a nice long road trip with it. Or maybe it was the other way around—we had a road trip on the horizon and knew this would be great for it.

SCHEDULES & LOGISTICS: It started out busy but simple. We had a multi-day event coming up here in Arizona, directly followed by our third regional vehicle comparo event in a row, this one in Santa Cruz, California, our first time participating. But before we said yes to Santa Cruz, we had to check on a potential family milestone event in Colorado, to make sure it didn't conflict.

Good news. We confirmed the Colorado affair would be the following weekend, so we signed up for Santa Cruz, arranged wheels for getting around there, as well as wheels for a Colorado drive, and marked the calendar for a perfect back-to-back-to-back sequence: the four-day Arizona event, fly to three days in California, fly back, then drive to Colorado, via Utah, taking another six or so.

Then, surprise! The Colorado event was moved

to the weekend prior, conflicting directly with both Arizona event and California—we basically had to be in all three at the same time. Could it be done?

The harder we worked on it, the clearer it was that we would not only need our own jet, but time travel, as well. So we caught what we could of the Arizona event, replanned our Utah-Colorado details and unfortunately scrubbed the California event.

That whole drill also focused us on the 18 mpg of our originally planned wheels. Then we found we could move to the RAV4. We were already fans. We also knew it would be twice as good for fuel economy. It has AWD and good ground clearance, in case Colorado had snow (factors for the original vehicle). And forums said an over-six-footer could still lie down and sleep in the back, if need be.

RAV4 ROAD TRIP: Every inch of the Utah-Colorado drive, which we've done many times, begs to be seen in daylight—San Francisco Peaks, Painted Desert, Monument Valley, the Moab area, Colorado National Monument, Glenwood Canyon and all the rest. On top of the scenery, there are a great many deer and other large critters on the roads in Northwest Colorado at night. Pure drive time is about 14 hours. Though you can do it nonstop (and

we have), fuel, food and photo stops lengthen everything and most realistically lead to overnights, thus consuming the bulk of two calendar days each way. But then you do get mostly daylight.

Our Colorado event would be on Saturday night. We loaded up some warmer clothes and a sleeping bag and left the Valley midafternoon Thursday.

We had moved into the RAV4 from something with more than triple its horsepower and felt the difference at first, along with its CVT. But only at first. Seemingly endless major construction heading up I-17 makes us miss the two-lane twists and climbs through Black Canyon, which always provided good insights on any vehicle. Nonetheless, there was plenty of quick lane-changing to be done, and we commended the RAV4's pep and precision the entire time—and this even though we uncharacteristically ran in Eco mode for much of the trip, for added fuel efficiency.

This drive is a solid benchmark for considerations of range (and timing) with any vehicle. It's why a bigger gas tank, or more electric range, is not just a matter of filling up less often around home. On a wide open Western road trip, it can be a matter of not being possible to make it to the next town, thus having to stop far more often, in turn adding hours to a trip, in turn maybe adding another motel night and shortening time available at our destination. RAV4 Hybrid for the win.

We knew we'd be winging it on overnights—keep pushing ahead, but with one eye on the clock and one on the scenery we'd miss at night. From

2024 TOYOTA RAV4 LINEUP

RAV4 I.C.E.: 203 HP, ≤ 27/35/30 MPG	FWD	4WD
LE	\$28,475	\$29,875
XLE	29,985	31,385
XLE Premium	32,875	34,275
● Adventure	---	34,670
● TRD Off-Road	---	38,095
Limited	36,780	38,180

RAV4 HYBRID: 219 HP, ≤ 41/38/40 MPG	4WD
Hybrid LE	\$31,475
Hybrid XLE	32,985
Hybrid XLE Premium	35,875
Hybrid SE	34,170
● Hybrid Woodland Special Edition	▼ 34,695
Hybrid XSE	37,135
Hybrid Limited	39,780

RAV4 PLUG-IN HYBRID: 302 HP, 40/36/38 MPG	4WD
Prime SE	\$41,590
Prime XSE	45,460

● Off-road grades (see sidebar at end).

Phoenix, potential plans include starting later the first day, getting a few hours out of the way and finishing the drive the next day—with motels in Flagstaff, Cameron or Kayenta; or pushing farther, to a series of small towns in Utah (tiny Bluff, Blanding, Monticello and busy Moab); and then a long stretch to Fruita and Grand Junction, Colorado, followed by a choice of routes (north, then east, or east, then north) to our destination, each with its own challenges on fuel stops and lodging.

We had started in the afternoon, so to see Monument Valley (in the morning), we'd have to overnight in one of those first towns.

We stopped for photos and social media posts near Sunset Point on I-17 at about 4:30 pm, rough-

(cont'd)

SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY	Woodstock, Ontario, Canada
ENGINE	2.5L Dynamic Force 4-cylinder, 16v DOHC w VVT-iE (variable valve timing-intelligent-electric) intake camshaft, VVT-i exhaust camshaft, alum alloy block/head
HP/TORQUE	176 hp / 163 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO	14.0:1
ELECTRIC MOTOR & BATTERY	
ELECTRIC MOTOR	perm magnet synchr
TORQUE	149/89 lb-ft
BATTERY PACK	sealed lithium-ion (Li-ion)
NOMINAL VOLTAGE	244.8V
HYBRID SYSTEM NET HP	219 combined hp
TORQUE	variously combined per above
TRANSMISSION	electronic CVT (ECVT) w sequential shift mode
DRIVETRAIN	electronic on-demand AWD
SUSPENSION	
	F: indep MacPherson strut, 25.5mm stblzr bar; Woodland Edition is TRD-tuned; R: multi-link w 23.5mm stblzr bar; Woodland Edition w unique shocks, struts, jounce bumpers
STEERING	
	rack-mounted parallel-type elec power-assist rack & pinion
BRAKES	
	F: power-assist 12.0 vented disc; R: 11.1 solid disc; electronic parking brake
WHEELS	
	Woodland: 18x7.0 std alum alloy
TIRES	
	Woodland: 225/60R18; temp spare
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	
	180.9 / 105.9 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	
	8.1 in
TURNING CIRCLE	
	36.1 ft
HEADROOM (F/R)	
	37.7 / 39.5 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	
	41.0 / 37.8 in
CARGO CAPACITY	
	37.5 / 69.8 cu.ft
WEIGHT	
	Woodland 3775 lb
TOW CAPACITY	
	1750 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	
	.87 oct reg unl / 14.5 gal
MPG	
	Woodland 38/35/37 (city/hwy/comb) (other trims: 41/38/40 city/hwy/comb)
BASE PRICE	
	\$34,695
TWO-TONE EXTERIOR COLOR	
	.500
DESTINATION CHARGE	
	1350
TOTAL	
	\$36,545





We took the same basic route up and back—through the red rocks around Moab (Fisher Tower Road at upper left, on the way back) and Monument Valley (a site commonly taken as emblematic of Arizona, although mostly in Utah). It's been 30 years since Forrest Gump hit the movie theaters, but its classic view of the road through Monument Valley still attracts a great many people today. Western Colorado welcomes you with red rocks reminiscent of everything from Moab to the Grand Canyon, not surprisingly, as it is all part of the same gargantuan Morrison Formation—also the source of more dinosaur finds than just about anywhere, which you can visit in more detail at Grand Junction area museums and park sites. Colorado's brief but famous fall colors also greeted us, along I-70 paralleling the Colorado River through Mesa, Garfield and Eagle Counties (though they had already passed as we headed north from there). Speaking of color, our sample's outdoorsy paint is called not Forest Green, as one might expect for a Woodland Edition, but rather Army Green—making it fit in well with this Bell UH-1 "Huey" helicopter at the Vietnam War Memorial in Fruita, Colorado. Somehow, we took a grand tour of everything but woodlands in our RAV4 Woodland Edition in Colorado or Utah, so we visited the Ponderosas of Coconino National Forest just north of Flagstaff, on the home stretch, at 7000 feet or so elevation (main photo).



ly 50 miles and roughly an hour and a half out.

We could stay in Flagstaff (140 miles) or Cameron (195 miles) and still achieve our destination in Colorado on Friday (575 miles from Cameron, a long day, all the moreso as we had a visit to make along the way). But it'd be better to go a little farther. We drove on to Kayenta (295 miles down, 475 to go), filling our tank at about 10 pm (with the change to Daylight Time on the Navajo Nation). We would always prefer to drive through Monument Valley in daylight, it is such a sight to see. But we decided to push on. Bluff, Utah has a fine inn, but it's relatively pricey and our night would be short. Blanding (roughly the halfway point) and Monticello have quick and easy motels with cafés nearby in the morning. But as it turns out, all those towns were full (and/or it was just getting increasingly too late to wake people up to ask).

We grabbed some water and quickmart snacks and forged on toward Moab, another hour north. It was now 64 degrees out, 50 degrees or so cooler than departure, but we were still fine in T-shirt and shorts. At about 40 minutes, there's a large parking lot, popular with truckers overnighting. It also has restrooms and vending machines, but those were closed. And there's not much privacy for catching a snooze in the back, unless you have a semi with sleeper cab. We'd want some decent sleep, as we had half the drive ahead of us, and we'd still want a shower, as we were stopping for that visit in Grand Junction.

So we forged on, hitting Moab about 2:30 am. There are plenty of motels there, but it was still high tourist season, with one room left, at almost \$400, pricey for 3-4 hours' sleep and a shower. The clerk tipped us off on where best to sleep in the RAV4 and shower at a recreational area in town. But, whereas we had knocked down half the rear seat quickly, upon departure, and roughly spread out our sleeping bag, at that point, it was looking tight. (We realized later it's a 60-40 fold, and we had folded down the smaller side, as we had hastily filled the rest with luggage and gear. Had we folded down the wider side, it would have been twice as inviting. Plus of course you can knock the whole row down.)

It was getting seriously late, impacting the coming day, but we increasingly wanted an actual room. We opted to aim for Fruita, Colorado, an hour and a half away. We headed north on US 191 toward I-70 (skipping scenic Fisher Towers Road, saving it also for the drive back).

We had the roads largely to ourselves by now, noting that our RAV4, even in Eco mode, is quite a performer, a little rocket. We were making time.

Nonetheless, when we hit I-70, we decided to drive 20-25 miles west, to Green River, Utah—

(cont'd)



(Above) Two-lanes and I-70 north of Moab and into Western Colorado offer elbow room and higher speeds (though signs warn of eagles on the highway). Staggered tiers and tunnels of I-70 in Glenwood Canyon along the Colorado River, about 120 miles from its source in Grand Lake. (Below) The Colorado River along Hwy 131 near Bond, about 70 miles from its source, and Fisher Towers Road in Utah, outside Moab, another 250 miles or so downstream.



closer and probably ready for travelers in the wee hours. About five miles along, though, we decided not to lose time going the wrong way—maybe a good idea now, but not as good an idea when the new day dawned. It took another five miles to find a legal turnaround. We arrived in Fruita about 4:30 am. Hello, Colorado. About 570 miles down, 200 or so to go. We had lost sleep-cycle efficiency, to be sure. Grand Junction amounted to a long overdue but too-short visit, a quick lunch and on our way.

There are two (or three) routes to Steamboat Springs from there, all about three-plus hours—up through either Rangely or Meeker to Craig, then east on US 40; or east on I-70, then north on Colorado 131. We took the latter, a chance to make Interstate time, with fewer deer and such on the road, the scenic drive through Glenwood Canyon, and theoretically more places to grab gas.

Grabbing gas easily proved to be highly theoretical, though. Exits are few and often obscured by truck traffic. We exited into the smaller towns and finally found an iffy unbranded station, cautiously putting in just \$15 worth, 80 miles to good gas.

If you think the roundabout people have been

busy in Arizona, you should see Colorado. Small towns are already intensely tightly mapped, and this pushes them toward madness. But it was one of many times we loved the RAV4's tight 36.1-foot turning circle and overall maneuverability.

Fall colors in Colorado are glorious, but brief and unpredictable. We knew we may or may not be lucky. We did have great timing along I-70 and the Colorado River. But heading north, we had pretty much missed the show with the aspens. It's quite colorless from then until the snow flies.

We were gaining altitude on Colorado 131, as well as working through many twists and turns at two-lane highway speeds. The electronic CVT was working hard here, but then again, we had that (partial) tank of mystery gas. Changing to sport mode made no noticeable difference. (Altitude can affect many things, but we did not note any such thing later, after refilling with name-brand gas.)

We got to town with about a quarter-tank left. It was now nighttime, too late for visits. And just as in Moab, they were down to their last affordable room, also pushing \$400. For a drive that can theoretically be nonstop, this was getting pricey.

Although we could have come via the Craig route, but didn't, we opted to push on for another 45 miles or so, despite the long hours so far, to grab a more affordable room west of Craig (then visit a close pal there on Saturday morning).

Steamboat Springs is, of course, a highly active ski-river-hiking-rodeo-and-more town. The joke is that when newcomers arrive in droves each fall for ski season, they are split up on two sides of main street, with one half being assigned big 4x4 pickups and the other side receiving active lifestyle compact crossovers. In other words, this is a prime Toyota RAV4 market, the new Woodland Edition all the moreso. Everywhere we went, there was great interest in our vehicle.

We spent Saturday night at our friends' house, then visited others on Sunday morning. We didn't have to be back till Tuesday night, but we'd never catch up with everybody, had about had it with motels, got restless and headed south.

We would have liked to stop in Grand Junction again, too, but in order to see Fisher Towers Road before it got dark, we drove on through. And just made it (main photo, below). From there, it was

a flip of the drive up—Moab, Monticello, Blanding and Bluff for potential overnights, with Monument Valley in daylight. Putting most of it behind us, we stayed in Blanding on Sunday night, about halfway home (380 miles down, 390 to go).

Monday was the balance of our drive. It was frustrating to realize our flight to the event in Santa Cruz had not even left Phoenix yet, but obviously it would be long gone by the time we could get there. Just fantasy math. Plus we no longer had flights or our car, nor were they expecting us, anyway. Plus we would want to stop for photos whenever and wherever. We fueled up in Blanding and continued south.

The RAV4 continued to impress us, the whole way—and to deliver whatever we needed. Though traffic is generally light, overall, this two-lane route attracts everything from performance cars, to convertibles, to fully loaded campers and trailers, to a fair amount of commercial truck traffic. If we needed to grab a chance to pass, we could always power up in an instant. The RAV4 just never let us down.

We had started the day at about 5 am MDT and

—including hitting extremely backed-up traffic on that stretch of I-17 construction through Black Canyon—arrived back home at about 5 pm MST.

AND IT'S A WRAP: The RAV4 Hybrid's tank holds 14.5 gallons. We had originally guesstimated our trip in round numbers, useful through all the variables—about 40 mpg and about five bucks a gallon. Our final readout was exactly 36.0 mpg (and gas, while expensive, was not quite that high). The RAV4 delivered.

In an era of cookie-cutter lookalikes, the RAV4 is distinctive, all Toyota up front, angular, fast and aerodynamic from the rear. RAV4's popularity has already been easy to spot, and on this trip, we saw its siblings everywhere we went (while we're pretty sure inspiring more sales in our wake).

With Toyota RAV4 now offering three off-road builds (and it would not surprise us if a TRD Pro joins the family in the future), you have a generous set of options, and their pricing lets you compare them on finer points.

The hybrid powertrain of the Woodland Edition is, however, a major point. ■

WOODLAND SPECIAL EDITION

"Go wild in style!" The outdoors-oriented **TOYOTA RAV4 HYBRID WOODLAND EDITION** (base price \$34,695 in its second year for 2024), is equipped with electronic all-wheel drive (e-AWD) and trail-tailored, TRD-tuned suspension with enhanced body control and small-bump isolation. Coil springs are tuned for the trails, with bump stops to maximize compression-direction wheel travel. Twin-tube shocks with internal rebound springs optimize roll control, and unique valving improves body control over large bumps and dips. Its 18-inch six-spoke bronze-color TRD flow-formed alloy wheels bear Falken WILD-PEAK AT off-road tires.

Woodland Edition's Toyota Hybrid System II (THS II) works in sync with the 2.5-liter 4-cylinder Dynamic Force Engine to deliver a combination of performance and efficiency, a 219-hp combined powertrain achieving a 37 MPG combined fuel economy rating. In addition to Sport and fuel-efficient Eco drive modes, Trail Mode acts as a virtual limited slip differential to deliver power to specific wheels for optimized traction as needed.

Style points include dual black chrome-tipped exhaust, black badges and exterior accents including mirrors, outside door handles and rear hatch touches. New this year are a two-tone paint combination and 1.25-inch rear activity mount standard (for a cargo carrier or tray style bike rack). Woodland Edition also has high profile black roof rails and standard cross bars, plus 120V power.

A Weather Package adds heated front seats, a heated leather-trimmed steering wheel, and rainsensing variable intermittent wipers with de-icer function.

A surprisingly spacious interior overall adds a number of details—from a large console, side-by-side cup holders and an open tray for small items, to an in-dash tray for phone and sunglasses. The rear area has a reversible cargo floor insert, as well as side nets for small items, and the 60/40 split rear seats flexibly expand the cargo area.

To tackle earth, water and sun, in addition to standard front and rear mudguards, there are exclusive Woodland-logoed all-weather floor mats and rear cargo mat; standard privacy glass on all rear side, quarter and lift-gate windows; LED projector-beam headlights standard; and integrated fog lights.

OTHER RAV4 OFF-ROAD GRADES

RAV4 ADVENTURE (\$34,670) and **TRD OFF-ROAD** (\$38,095) are standard with Dynamic Torque Vectoring AWD with Rear Driveline Disconnect. Directing up to 50 percent of torque to the rear wheels, this system can also direct more torque to the left or right rear to enhance on- or off-pavement handling. •