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Honda's first diesel for India ready to live up to its name



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HONDA READY TO AMAZE INDIA

We test-drove the all-new Honda Amaze diesel in Japan a few weeks ago. This car has been designed and engineered especially for India and is sure to pose a tough challenge to its competitors

Story: [Aspi Bhathena](#)
Photography: Honda



LAST YEAR HONDA LAUNCHED THEIR SMALL CAR, the Brio, in India and it has not done as well as Honda expected it to do even though it is a very good car. In fact, the Brio won the Car India Award for the best petrol hatchback car of the year. In the past three to four years petrol prices have shown a consistently northward trend while Honda's sales have shown a southward one; not because their cars are not good – the only reason for this is that they did not have a diesel engine in their portfolio. However, this is all set to change very soon.

Last month we were flown to Japan to test the all-new Honda Amaze diesel. This car has been designed and engineered especially for India.

The Amaze has been built on the Brio platform and looks like the Brio from the front, but that's where the similarity ends. From the side and the rear it does not look as if someone has stuck a boot on to the hatchback or taken a hacksaw and chopped off the rear end to meet the sub-four-metre length to get the benefit of a lower excise duty in India. The side profile of the Amaze makes it look like a proper sedan unlike most sub-four-metre cars in India today.

An increase of 60 millimetres in the wheelbase of the Amaze has worked wonders for the rear leg space, which is better than that in some of the full-size sedans. With the driving position set for myself (5' 11") it was possible for Sandeep Shreekant of CNBC, who is 6' 6", to sit behind the driver's seat. The interior size does not mean that ▶



▲ The new all Alloy i-DTEC diesel engine

they have compromised on the boot size either – it is nearly twice as big compared to its competition. They have truly applied the Honda mantra of ‘more man, less machine’.

The biggest story is the all-new i-DTEC 1,500-cc diesel engine from Honda specifically for India. When Honda started working on the diesel project they looked at all the diesel engines from the competitors against which to benchmark their new engine, but did not find any of the other engines good enough for that purpose. Therefore, they decided to set a benchmark of their own. This is a state-of-the-art, all-aluminium engine while all the diesel engines from the competitors have a cast iron cylinder-block. It has a lot of advantages like light weight, better cooling. Since aluminium helps in quicker heat dissipation, it helps the engine remain cooler.

The refinement of this engine will also set a benchmark, because it is extremely quiet even when you are standing outside the car and the power characteristic of the engine has been tailored for Indian driving conditions. Although Honda did not reveal the power and torque figures in respect of the Amaze, I reckon it must be producing somewhere between 85 and 90 PS of power and about 200 Nm of torque.

As of now, only one prototype exists and there were about 20 odd

journalists waiting to drive it. Therefore, each of us could enjoy only a short drive, but it was enough to form an opinion about the car. The moment you crank the engine, it comes to life and settles down to idle without any clatter, which is synonymous with most diesel engines. While driving at the test track one could engage the fifth gear at as low as 1,000 revs and the car would pull cleanly. The engine has a flat power and torque curve (with no turbo lag) with seamless acceleration from 1,000 revolutions per minute right up to 4,000 RPM without any spikes in the power delivery. According to Honda, the car will also set a benchmark in fuel efficiency. The only niggle was that the combustion noise could be heard when you loaded the engine, but that is going to be taken care of in the production car for the prototype car's engine firewall sound damping was from the petrol version.

The Amaze felt well planted around corners and there was no squealing or protest from the MRF tyres during some hard cornering on the test track. The light steering wheel gives ample feedback and the car is easy to manoeuvre.

With all the space and driveability that the Honda Amaze possesses, it will make life very difficult for the competitors. Now Honda have a winner on their hand and they just have to price it competitively. **car**



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