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**26 Best of both worlds** our first impression of the all-new Toyota Camry Hybrid





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## dose of tec

Armed with a hybrid system, clever technologies and luxury, the new Camry

bestselling car worldwide and has met with considerable success in India as well. I remember doing a first drive report of the Camry when it was first launched in India and calling it a plush sofa on wheels, excellent on comfort and with a great ride but not much else. It fitted in very well as did the affordable luxury car. The lat-

he Camry has been Toyota's next generation Camry, which bestselling car worldwide again I reviewed. That was a was launched was quite a let remained is a large petrol engine big leap forward in terms of features and technology, even though its rounded appearance and the sky blue launch colour gave it a very feminine feel. The car had an excellent ride and handled well and was all that one could have asked for in an

was launched was quite a let down. While it had all the space and comfort, it just lacked that premium feel, whether it be the plastics or the wooden finish. The good thing though was that the car was now being made in India.

remained is a large petrol engine leading to poor fuel efficiency and the lack of a diesel option. All that is about to change though. When Toyota shifted the production of the present generation Camry Hybrid to Thailand, there was always a possibility that the And all through these three carwould be introduced in India generations of the Camry in as Thailand is the mother plant

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#### has taken a huge leap forward

for Toyota's Indian operations. around Bidadi. Despite no clear guidelines on hybrid technology or government help or relaxation of taxation for hybrid cars, Toyota has decided to go ahead with exact a recommendation of taxation for hybrid cars, Toyota powertrain, the exterior changes are cosmetic with additional launching the Camry Hybrid in India and we were in Bangalore to put the car through its paces at the company's test track as well as the roads

While one might have expected some minor changes chrome at various places, most significantly around the fog lamps, a changed grille and hybrid and hybrid synergy drive badging, plus LED head-



The driving experience that the hybrid affords is quite unique. The car is much quieter and feels refined though it takes some getting used to.



The engine is a 2.5-litre unit, but as part of the Hybrid Synergy Drive has the capability of competing with the Nano engine for fuel efficiency. Above 20kmpl is possibile. The start/stop switch is the power switch (inset) as the engine may not start but the car is ready to be driven



Like the front, the changes at the rear are minimal with LEDs used for brake lights in the combination tail-lamp

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# **NEW CARS**

Leather and high quality wood have transformed the dash. The steering wheel also looks upmarket as does the centre console with the touchscreen display. The transformation of the interiors of the Camry is quite startling

### Marvels of Toyota's Hybrid Synergy D

■ Toyota is the world leader in hybrid vehicles with electricity and recharging the battery pack. So when able on earth and hybrid systems extend their life one in possibly every segment that it is present in. Its Prius is the worlds largest selling hybrid car and Toyota has sold over 5 million hybrid vehicles in the world. It is no wonder that a technologically advanced company like BMW inked agreements with Toyota for research and development for lithium-ion and lithium-air battery packs as well as other advanced

alternative technologies. Toyota uses a somewhat different system for its

hybrid drives than many other compnies, including Honda, which was the other company to sell hybrid cars in India. Toyota's system is a series-parallel system with a gasoline engine and a permanent magnet motor, which also doubles up as a generator as the two sources of power. The system can then draw power from either of the two sources in isolation or from a combination of the two as well.

The system itself intelligently switches between the two modes of power and also decides when it uses the motor for generating driving at constant low speeds or when starting, only the motor supplies power and the engine is switched off or not started at all. When extra power is required, like when going uphill or when accelerating hard, both the engine and the motor could be supplying power to the wheels while coming down a slope the engine may be shut off and the motor used as a generator.

We have limited amounts of fossil fuels avail-

intelligently. With reserves fast depleting, there will soon come a time when all cars sold with internal combustion engines will feature hybrid drivetrains, whether plug in or otherwise. Toyota is well poised to tackle such a future and the Camry already shows how well the company has been able to tune its hybrid synergy drive when on normal driving it is well possible to get 20kmpl from the car. Combined with

a fuel tank of 65 litre means that the Camry now competes with diesel engine cars for







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Toyota Camry Hybrid

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The Hybrid gets a blue optitron instrument cluster. A power meter replaces the tachometer which displays whether it is driving in Eco mode or power mode





Assist grips are a unique feature on a premium car. The front seat can be adjusted from the rear by knobs on its side



The touchscreen display has an energy monitor graphic which shows energy usage





Controls of the air-con are on the rear armrest. The compartment ahead of the front armrest has USB, AUX-in slots and power outlet

interiors though are completely transformed. This is what the Camry interiors should have been in the first place. Materials used are much better, plastics are soft touch and the wood and leather finish gives the cabin a premium feel. Even in terms of features there has been a major upgrade. Whether it be the reclining rear seats, the 3-zone climate control system or the grab handles at the rear of the front seats the transformation is substantial. List of features is impressive and make the Camry a serious threat to the premium car brands.

However, at the heart and soul of this transformation is the Hybrid Synegy Drive (read more about it in the accompanying box) which mates a 2.5-litre

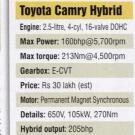
lamps and LED brake lights. The 4-cylinder 16-valve DOHC engine to a motor generator in a seriesparallel. While the engine on its own has a max power output of 160bhp@5,700rpm and max torque of 213Nm@ 4500rpm, the motor is a 105kW one with torque production of 270Nm. The hybrid drive though combines the two to have max power of 205PS. The motor which also doubles up as a generator stores electricity it produces in a 34 module 204 cells Nickel metal hydride battery pack. The braking system too is electronically controlled and features regenerative braking. The full system is neatly demonstrated on the touch-screen display which shows the charge in the battery pack and also the flow of energy, from the engine to the battery pack and wheels or from the battery pack to the



The rear seat armrest has controls and display for the rear air-con and buttons for reclining the rear seats as well as audio controls



In profile, the Camry Hybrid looks the same as the regular Camry except for the new 10-spoke alloy wheels



wheels or as the case may be. The Hybrid Synergy Drive is linked to an electronically controlled CVT gearbox to utilize the full potential of the system.

Battery Pack: Nickel Metal Hydride

On sale September 2013

The car is great to drive, with loads of torque available from a standing start and handles and rides as well as the previous generation car. Fuel efficiency will be the strong point of this car and though ARAI certifies it to be 19.16kmpl, many of the journalists including us got better figures than that.

#### What we like

Luxury The word had gone missing from the normal Camry is back on the Hybrid

#### ♦ What we don't

Not Much There is very little not to like about this car

#### What surprised us

**Fuel Efficiency** The hybrid system works so well that a large car like this has better FE than small hatchbacks

#### **Verdict**

This is what the Camry should have been in the first place. Now not only does it offer peace to your conscience, it does it in five star style. Price though is yet to be decided and will determine the fortunes of this car.

Yogendra Pratap



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