



www.autodatasolutions.com

2014 Honda Odyssey It even comes with a vacuum cleaner.

Overview

The Honda Odyssey is about function and making family life easier. It can carry a family of eight, or half a high-school soccer team, with all their coolers, balls, tents, shoes, whatever. It can tow a small trailer with a motorcycle or watercraft. Odyssey can carry 4x8 plywood flat on the floor, with 10-foot-long boards can be stacked on them, extending between the front seats when the convenient removable console is taken out. Best of all, it's loaded with conveniences designed to simplify life.

The Honda Odyssey was thoroughly redesigned and re-engineered for the 2011 model year, marking a new generation of one of America's favorite multi-purpose vehicles.

For 2014, Odyssey gets minor tweaks to trim that freshen its appearance. Noteworthy equipment updates include Bluetooth and Pandora as standard equipment and the industry's only built-in vacuum cleaner, which works better than any cordless vacuum we've used and better than most corded handhelds. And the 2014 Odyssey is safer yet, with more warning systems and driver assists, a benefit of its revised structure for 2014. It is the first van to earn an IIHS Top Safety Pick Plus, including a Good rating in the small overlap front crash test. (The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety is a lobbying organization for the auto-insurance industry.)

Though still called a minivan, there is nothing mini about the modern minivan. The Honda Odyssey, Toyota Sienna, Dodge Grand Caravan, Chrysler Town & Country, Nissan Quest, and Kia Sedona are big passenger vehicles, most stretching past 16 1/2 feet in overall length. If you need a true mini-van, you might consider the Mazda5.

For many uses, and especially for carrying people, a Honda Odyssey or one of its competitors makes more sense than a full-size sport-utility or crossover. A minivan often handles better and is generally more space and fuel-efficient. The Odyssey is less expensive than a luxury SUV, gets better fuel economy, and has more cargo room, with greater flexibility in how the space is configured. Unless you need all-wheel drive or you tow a big car or boat, the Odyssey should work. Odyssey's third-row seats set a new standard in legroom, with as much space as the front seats in a Cadillac Escalade or even the Odyssey itself.

The Honda 248-hp V6 engine and 6-speed automatic transmission lead the class in fuel economy without lagging in performance.

Comfort and poise are excellent, even with six large people on board. Six airbags including three-row side curtains are standard. Blind-spot and lane-departure warnings, the LaneWatch right-side camera view, and forward collision warning are optional.

Odyssey's main competition is the Toyota Sienna, which offers more choices with a four-cylinder engine, a sport model and available all-wheel drive; Sienna does not offer eight seats, however. Dodge Grand Caravan and Nissan Quest are the primary alternatives to the Honda and Toyota.

Model Lineup

All 2014 Honda Odyssey models use a 248-hp 3.5-liter V6 engine, 6-speed automatic transmission, front-wheel drive and have a 3500-pound tow rating. The only mechanical differences among them are wheel material and size.

Odyssey LX (\$28,825) seats seven on cloth upholstery. It includes front and rear manual air conditioning, eight-way power driver's seat, four-way power passenger seat, tilt/telescoping steering wheel, one-touch signals, power windows, power locks, power mirrors (with wide-angle element driver), adjustable second-row seats, 60/40-split fold-in-floor third row seats, 229-watt AM/FM/CD/MP3 five-speaker stereo system, rearview camera, Bluetooth hands-free and streaming audio, Pandora interface, SMS text function, auto-off projector headlights, cruise control, reading lights for all rows, trip computer and 10 beverage holders.

Odyssey EX (\$32,125) has eight seats and adds power sliding side doors, three-zone automatic climate control, driver power lumbar, LaneWatch, pushbutton start, second-row sunshades and multi-function seats, alloy wheels, removable front center console with two more cupholders, 2GB CD library and seven speakers with subwoofer, USB port, HomeLink, HondaLink with Aha, intelligent Multi-Information Display (i-MID) with 8-inch touch-screen, conversation mirror, security system, heated mirrors, wheel-mounted audio controls, wiper-linked auto on/off headlights, compass and outside temperature display.

Odyssey EX-L (\$35,625) upgrades to leather upholstery and steering wheel-wrap, power moonroof and tailgate, forward collision and lane-departure warning, heated front seats, XM radio, front cool box, and auto-dimming mirror. EX-L is offered with rear entertainment or navigation, but not both: An EX-L with RES (\$37,225) adds the rear-entertainment system (RES) with 9-inch screen, wireless headphones/jacks and a 115-VAC outlet. Odyssey EX-L with Navigation (\$37,625) adds navigation with voice recognition, FM traffic info, multi-view rear camera and 15GB disk drive.

Odyssey Touring (\$41,880) gets 18-inch wheels and mild aerodynamic changes like side sills and mirrors with signal repeaters. Touring also adds to EX-L driver-memory system linked to reverse-tilt mirrors, an acoustic windshield, standard navigation and rear entertainment, third-row sunshades, third-row center armrest, multi-information display, corner and backup sensor indicators, fog lamps and ambient footwell lighting.

Odyssey Touring Elite (\$44,450) is a Touring model with blind-spot warning system, HID headlamps, HondaVAC, and a dual-input 16.2-inch widescreen rear entertainment system linked to a 650-watt, 12-speaker Neural 5.1 surround sound system with HD radio.

Safety features on every Odyssey include frontal airbags, front side-impact airbags, rearview camera, three-row curtain airbags, tire pressure monitors, electronic stability control, ABS, EBD, and brake assist. LaneWatch, lane departure warning, forward collision warning and blind-spot monitors are standard on some versions.

Walkaround

The Honda Odyssey got longer and wider in its 2011 revision, resulting in good aerodynamics.

Odyssey's refreshed styling adds new premium elements for 2014. Highlights include new black-trimmed headlights, new fog lights, a more muscular-looking hood, a black-surround grille, new body-color side mirrors, more bright trim, revised rear styling, and LED taillights with clear lenses. Weight savings come from the use of aluminum for the hood, front fenders and front suspension lower control arms. The LX model features 17-inch steel wheels with premium covers, while EX and EX-L models utilize 17-inch premium aluminum alloy wheels. Touring and Touring Elite models feature 18-inch premium sport aluminum alloy wheels.

Odyssey is within a couple inches of its competitors in every measure. The grille and headlamps appear to be a cross between the Honda Insight and Civic, and Toyota Sienna. Odyssey's looks are somewhat daring by class standards, but boxy minivan architecture, function and mission all conspire to limit styling. Touring models have aero rocker panels and mirrors, and larger wheels.

One distinctive visual feature is the drop at the bottom of the window line, behind the sliding doors. They call it the lightning-bolt look, a bit of an exaggeration, but it does break up the monotony and improves the view from the third row.

The front and rear door handles are paired in a mild recess, almost reminiscent of a Rolls-Royce with rear-hinged rear doors. The sliding doors and hatch can be opened with the touch of a button.

The roofline looks something like a tent pulled taut over a stake, similar to that of the Acura MDX, or even the late Mercedes R-Class. Taillights use clear lens signals with amber bulbs for visual pop without the expense of LED lamps. A spoiler atop the hatch is standard, and the power tailgate (EX-L and above) has pinch protection. Roof rails are a dealer accessory.

It may look the same as a previous year but the 2014 Odyssey has a revised body structure underneath for improved crash and rollover protection. At this writing no van has tested better.

Interior Features

The Odyssey LX seats seven, and all other models seat eight. We found it roomier and more comfortable than any SUV including a long-wheelbase Cadillac Escalade. Only full-size vans (Sprinter, Transit, ProMaster, Express, etc.) offer more interior space, until you get to buses and motor homes.

With all three rows of seats up, the cargo area is 38.4 cubic feet, just 7 less than a big SUV. With the third-row folded it grows to 93 cubic feet, and with the second row down there's a breathtaking 148.5 cubic feet of cargo space. A 4x8-foot sheet of plywood will go flat on the floor, and 10-foot-long 2x4s will even fit, between the front seats when the center console is removed. The floors are lower than they are on SUVs, so loading is easy. The Lazy Susan-like cargo area under the second-row floor carries a space-saver spare tire. With the third-row seats in place, a well contains groceries instead of allowing them to roll all over the place as they do in most SUVs.

High-quality cloth upholstery is used in the LX and EX, leather in the other three models, with carpeting and soft-touch panels above the muddy foot zone. The LX doesn't feel cheap like a commercial vehicle, while the Touring model is as luxurious as a nice Accord. The Odyssey is full of useful bins and good ideas. If you've never owned a van, the Odyssey makes you wonder how you managed without one.

The dashboard, center stack and controls are conventional, and the styling is conservative. Some others' wood-grain trims and leathers may be fancier, but no more functional and no better assembled. Indeed our only gripe was wishing the shift-lever had an indicator light in it rather than just the in-instrument display.

The primary gauges are easy to see through the steering wheel, which can be tilted and telescoped. Any of four displays at top center is shaded by a hood, and we could see them even wearing polarized sunglasses. Center vents frame the climate controls, including a sync button to match all the zones. Below those another screen for audio functions, with the audio/navigation controller at bottom: There are times you're not sure which screen your input

will show up on, with some audio functions appearing on the audio screen and some on the upper (navigation/camera) screen.

The rear climate controls are above the right sliding door, where only a kid could spill a milkshake on them. There are eight overhead vents for the back two rows and on some models window shades fore the second, or second and third, rows.

A power driver's seat is standard. Adjustable pedals are unavailable. Some drivers will find their right leg resting against the center tunnel which is not padded.

The Odyssey chassis uses active noise cancellation and active engine mounts to minimize unwanted noise. A laminated windshield reduces wind noise in the Touring. In the middle row, any noise comes from the sliding door, and in the third row it comes from the rear tires. We found it is easy to carry on a normal conversation at freeway speeds.

The view out the windshield from the rear seats is very good, with tidy pillars and front headrests. Of course, if the passengers are watching a movie using the available entertainment system, the drop-down screen takes away visibility, but that's how it goes, it's worth it. Having six passengers in back will be more of an issue, because the center shoulder belts anchor in the roof on opposite sides. Upper models have parking sensors, multi-view rear camera and blind-spot warning, but in the rearview mirror, the driver can see through the right rear anyhow, unlike some SUVs with thick pillars.

There's a generous 40.9 inches of legroom in the second row with the seats lid rearward, with enough room behind that for your 6-foot, 3-inch correspondent. The seats can be moved apart so that three child seats will fit, or you can have two child seats and still be able to move the third section for back-row access. The middle section slides forward for an easier reach for front-row occupants, or creates a large center armrest, and all can be removed for cargo. One lever will fold, tilt, slide or remove the seats. We love it all.

Third-row seats set a new standard in legroom, with as much space as the front seats in a Cadillac Escalade: a cited 42.4 inches. It's three-wide for kids and two for adults, with good headrests. Like the second seat, the split-folding third-row seat can be folded into the floor with one tug. It's like magic, and it works great.

If gadgets and details make the minivan, the Odyssey does not disappoint. Besides that removable center console, you can get a four-pack coolbox under the dash, grocery bag hooks, more than a dozen beverage holders, four coat hooks, a purse (or trash bag) holder, and bins, cubbies and reading lights throughout. Indeed, the Odyssey is a great vehicle for six adults out on the town.

The ultimate gadget for many will be the Odyssey Touring Elite's built-in vacuum cleaner. Neatly stowed in the left rear cargo area wall (where lesser models secure the second-row middle seat not in use), the Shop-Vac built HondaVAC unit runs for 8 minutes on battery, indefinitely with the engine running, and can reach anywhere in the van. A leading consumer publication that knows about vacuum cleaners approved, and we tried dirt, Goldfish, gummy bears and M&Ms without issue; we'd still clean the feet before tracking in beach sand. The vacuum looks and feels like a high-quality unit, with a long, high-quality hose and carpet and crevice tools. Pulling it out and re-stowing it is delightfully quick and easy.

On Odysseys with leather, you can get DVD rear-seat entertainment. On the Touring Elite it's a 16-inch HDMI widescreen that shows side-by-side images or one panorama, using 650 watts driving 12 speakers in 5.1 surround sound. If someone ever asks, "Are we there yet?" you won't hear them.

Driving Impressions

It's easy to see why the Honda Odyssey is called a benchmark. When it comes to road manners, it's the most refined of its kind. When it grew in 2011, it also got tighter.

The 3.5-liter V6 is smooth, quiet, and efficient. It has active cylinder management that runs on 3, 4 or 6 cylinders as needed, improving fuel efficiency. All versions now use a 6-speed automatic so EPA ratings are 19/28 miles per gallon across the line; over thousands of very hard miles our unit had averaged more than 19 mpg, our personal experience was 17 mpg in town and 28 mpg cruising at 65-75 mph. Odyssey's EPA ratings better the six-cylinder Toyota Sienna, Nissan Quest, and Chrysler Town & Country, none of them better than 19/25 mpg. The Odyssey's V6 has higher EPA ratings than the four-cylinder Sienna.

Odyssey comes with an excellent 6-speed automatic transmission. It shifts quickly and smoothly as needed. The transmission lacks a sport mode, but we don't think it's needed. If using lower gears in snow or ice we recommend selecting them from a standstill.

Vans generally handle better than people expect. They are often more stable than SUVs because their center of gravity is lower. Among minivans, the Odyssey is one of the best combinations of benign, predictable handling and smooth ride quality. Fully loaded an Odyssey splits the weight almost perfectly among all wheels so the handling behavior doesn't change significantly.

The steering is light on center, and weights up with cornering effort. It's direct without being overly quick, gives good feel for the front tires, and pulls a U-turn in 36.7 feet, very good for a big box. We found the Odyssey corners like a heavy, front-wheel-drive sedan: stable, predictable and secure. The electronic stability control is not invasive; on the one occasion we managed to reach the limit it gently and quietly put things back on the ideal course.

The Odyssey rides like a big sedan, too, admirably soaking up bumps. The Toyota Sienna is stiffer but compared to the Odyssey feels rubbery, leaving the driver slightly less connected and passengers rolling more. Among the vans, the Sienna Sport is the one we'd put closest to a driver's car.

The brakes also have good feel, unfazed by our downhill charges. No van is tuned for sports-car handling, but that didn't stop us from trying sports car roads and parking-lot autocross courses. That tells you something about how it would behave in an emergency maneuver.

The Odyssey doesn't offer all-wheel drive, so it's not a van for places with lots of snow. The Toyota Sienna is available with AWD.

Summary

The Honda Odyssey seats plenty of people, has a vast cargo capacity, excellent room, and is chock full of storage places and good ideas for convenience. Its crash ratings are the best for any minivan. The Honda V6 is smooth and efficient, with excellent fuel economy. The handling and ride are sweet. The Odyssey can be equipped for full-tilt style and fun, with a rear-seat entertainment system. For most people, the Honda Odyssey is a better vehicle than a crossover SUV.

[Autodata Solutions](#), Inc. is an authorized distributor of [NewCarTestDrive Reviews](#).