ROADSIDE ASSIST

ELECTRIC CHARGE

IAIN CURRY GETS ANSWERS

WRITE TO MOTORING AT
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I'm considering a new car and want to learn the differences between hybrid and electric vehicles in terms of technology, performance, efficiency, purchase and running costs so I can make an informed choice.
Peter Brock, email
Pure EVs, such as the pictured Nissan Leaf, are expensive and heavy due to their batteries, but cheap to run if you have solar or access to a free charging point. Electric motors are relatively simple so service costs are minimal, and performance can be lighting quick. Hybrids — which are much cheaper — have a petrol or diesel engine supplemented by an electric motor and small battery pack. They're at their best in city driving, where they can use up to half the fuel of a conventional car. The batteries are charged as the vehicle slows and they don't need to be plugged in. Plug-in hybrids (PHEVs) have a larger battery that can deliver a pure electric range of about 50 kilometres, enough to cover the average round trip commute. After that they switch to the petrol engine, which means no range anxiety. They need to be plugged in and recharged overnight, though. What's best for you? Everyone's circumstances and budgets are different, so lots of homework is required, but hybrids such as the Toyota RAV4 and Camry are the best value for money.

MADE IN CHINA

I fully agree with James Taylor saying we shouldn't buy Chinese-owned cars like MG. Despite what you argued, brands building cars in China is different to buying a wholly Chinese-owned product.
Naozer Contractor, email
Different, yes, but I was highlighting the fact that many brands assemble cars in China and/or use components from there. Many take the moral high ground without recognising this.

GRINDS MY GEARS

Why can't Toyota provide a better gearbox for the LandCruiser 70 Series? They've known for years the fifth gear shaft is too small. Instead of fixing it, on a vehicle made for work and heavy duty 3500kg towing, we're told not to use fifth gear when towing.
Barry Bourne, email
For those who don't know, the LandCruiser 70 Series is the one that's been around since the dinosaurs. Well, the mid-1980s anyway. Post-2017 models have a taller fifth gear to reduce some of the V8 wail (and thirst) on the highway. Some owners agree with you, others swear by the 70 Series' five-speed gearbox, but yes, avoiding fifth when towing uphill seems recommended practice.

SIMPLE TASTES

I'd like to buy a car for about $15,000 that's economical and reliable. I'm almost 70, brand is not important and it can be a sedan or SUV.
Ray McAllister, email

New cars are just out of budget, so I'd favour something a few years old with factory warranty remaining. Kia's seven years is hard to look past, and there's a dealer in Dubbo, your home town, making servicing easy. A 2016/17 Cerato would suit, but if you think your mobility will suffer in coming years, an SUV will be easier to access due to higher ride height. A 2015 Kia Sportage would suit and you'd probably find one with two years warranty intact.

BLOW THE BUDGET

I can't get my head around people asking you the question "What do you suggest for $50,000?" Fifty grand? Where do people get their money? Back in my day spending $15,000 on a car was only for the rich. Today's society must get its financial side under control.
Paul Williams, email

POWER HUNGRY

I'm considering a used Lexus RC F with nice V8 engine. Are they reliable and is servicing reasonable?
David Reid, email
The world's pushing for stricter emissions and you're considering a 351kW/530Nm 5.0-litre V8? Good man David, like your style. RC F values have dropped like a stone, and as it's a Lexus it'll be as reliable as any brand you can imagine, and certainly versus other V8 performance cars. Services are typically over $700 per visit at Lexus, but dealers tend to treat customers like royalty. Seek an RC F with some of its four-year warranty remaining. And move closer to a servo.

If you've owned a shoebox in Sydney or Melbourne these past 10 years and seen its value go up $500,000, that helps justify spending $50,000 on a new car. Plenty of credit is being handed out as well — witness all the P-platers in $50,000 double cab utes cruising around.

AMERICAN BEAUTY

I'm 67 and looking at buying a Chevy Corvette in my retirement. I'd love a C3 (1968-82) but it might be out of my price range, so a C4 (1984-96) is an alternative, but wondered which year is better than others? I always wanted one growing up.
Paul Scicluna, email
If it was your dream car, don't settle for anything other than the shape you fell in love with. It's subjective, but the earlier C3 is a curvaceous extroverted joy, while the C4 is clinically '80s. The price difference between the two isn't vast. Owners clubs are invaluable resources to get the best advice and often you'll find enthusiast members selling well-maintained examples. Try corvettesdownunder.com. Take your time, there are plenty up for sale.

GRASS ISN'T GREENER

I'm enjoying my 2019 Nissan Navara, until it needs a service. I've just been slugged $532. It costs $2660 for five years' servicing versus the Toyota HiLux's $1500. Why is the Navara's so expensive?
Ian Sutton, email
We've led you astray here, sorry Ian. Our review of the HiLux last week said servicing was $1500 over five years, but it was in fact $1500 over three years. Toyota only caps HiLux service costs for three years and after that they rise steeply. So while the HiLux is cheaper to service than your Navara over three years ($1500 to $1816), it's more expensive over five ($3537 to $2971). The Toyota also requires servicing every six months/10,000km, while the Nissan only needs servicing every 12 months/20,000km, which is more convenient, especially if you travel longer distances.