

Toyota Corolla Cross 1.8 XS CVT HV: Save the planet, enjoy the ride

By [Alan Duggan](#)

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Many years ago, I was given an opportunity to drive the ground-breaking Toyota Prius in the UK, shortly before its South African launch. Over the course of two weeks, I travelled from London to the Scottish Highlands and back in a variety of road conditions, achieving an average fuel consumption of around 5ls/100km, which was pretty good for the time.



It was my first experience with a dual-powerplant vehicle, and I've appreciated hybrids ever since for their contribution to... you know, saving the planet and stuff. No, really. If your budget can accommodate wheels that match your environmental conscience – or more specifically, cleaner air – but can't quite stretch to a fully electric vehicle, this hybrid could be the way to go.

Soothsayers and dreamers envisage a time when the bigger South African cities will be forced to adopt a version of the central London congestion charge, a steep daily fee of about R323, or a more recent scheme known as ULEZ (Ultra Low Emission Zone), which levies an additional charge of R269 a day to drive inside the zone if your car doesn't meet a stringent emissions standard. In a nation where Ses'fikile rules the road, a driver's licence can be bought for a song and traffic rules are regarded as mere suggestions? Not going to happen.

Recently, I spent a week with Toyota's Corolla Cross hybrid – and it was a revelation. Frankly, I'm not sure why the R577,800 Prius, albeit upgraded and significantly improved over the years, is still in the company's line-up, because as far as hybrids go, the Cross Hybrid – assembled at Toyota's plant in KwaZulu Natal – appears to have it all.

Okay, it won't blow your hair back when you floor your right foot and it won't exactly stir your blood when you tackle a twisty mountain pass, but when you're spending upwards of 400 grand on a hybrid vehicle, it's reasonable to assume that your priorities lie elsewhere. That's not to say it's a slouch: when you need to overtake at highway speeds, there's plenty of grunt to speed you past a dawdling truck.

Motive power is provided by an electric motor producing 53kW and a 1.8l petrol engine churning out 72kW, driving the front wheels through a continuously variable transmission, aka CVT. (The mathematically inclined need to know that the total output is not an aggregate of both powerplants; hence 90kW in real terms.)

Exploring the rush-hour mayhem is painless because the CVT does all the work, while on the open road, the driving experience is pure pleasure. The roadholding is good and the suspension hits the right spot between firm and forgiving.

Cabin space is generous, and there's plenty of knee room for rear-seat passengers. Luggage space is just okay but becomes downright impressive with the rear seatbacks folded down. It comes with all the mod-cons you might expect: park distance control at the rear, ABS, electronic brake-force distribution, hill assist control, vehicle stability control, reverse camera, cruise control, Android Auto and Apple CarPlay, and three USB ports.

Will the Corolla Cross Hybrid succeed in price-conscious South Africa? I hope so.

Now go out there and save the planet.





Toyota Corolla Cross 1.8 XS CVT Hybrid: Just the facts

- Price: R413,000
- What makes it go: 1.8l petrol engine, electric motor
- Max power: 90kW in total: 72kW from the petrol engine at 5,200r/min plus 53kW from the electric motor
- Torque: 142Nm at 3,600r/min from the engine, with extra grunt the electric motor
- Top speed: 170km/h
- Transmission: CVT, front-wheel drive
- Fuel consumption: 4.3ls/100km (claimed, combined cycle)
- Safety: Side, driver, passenger, driver's knee airbags
- Warranty: Three years/100,000km
- Hybrid battery warranty: Eight years/195,000km
- Service plan: Six services/90,000km
- Other variants: Cross 1.8 Xi CVT (R349,900), Cross 1.8 XS CVT (R390,100), Cross 1.8 XR CVT (R425,400), Cross 1.8 XR CVT Hybrid (R448,300)

ABOUT ALAN DUGGAN

Alan Duggan was the founding editor of *Popular Mechanics* in South Africa and is a former motoring correspondent for the *Sunday Times* and other publications.

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