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The Best Fuel Economy for the Dollar

With gas prices remaining over $4 per gallon, a lot of people are trading in their gas guzzlers for something more economical. While hybrids get the best miles per gallon, they come at a premium price not everyone can afford. So, what are some other options?

An article in Consumer Reports this month reported on their research into this question. In developing their list of the top ten "best", they looked at a number of vehicles and divided the vehicle's selling price by their overall MPG (from their own fuel economy tests) to get the price per MPG. They also took into account their criteria for performance, reliability and safety in developing the rankings and, lastly, they factored in the cost of ownership.

The Toyota Yaris and the Hundai Accent came in with the lowest price per MPG ($370 and $425, respectively) but they didn't make Consumer Report's top ten because they didn't meet the other criteria.

Two models of the Honda Fit came in first and second – the Sport with a manual transmission came in at $464/mpg and the base Honda Fit came in at $476/mpg. Both are in the $15,000 price range, making them affordable for a lot of people.

The base version of the Toyota Prius, at a first cost of $24,000, came in third at $540/mpg. But in fourth place was the non-hybrid Mazda 3i which, at a cost of just over $17,000, came in at $576/mpg.. That's $7,000 less than a Prius for close to the same overall value!

To see the whole article take this link –
http://www.consumerreports.org/cro/cars/new-cars/cr-recommended/best-fuel-economy-for-the-buck/overview/best-fuel-economy-for-the-buck-ov.htm

Another way to look at fuel economy is in terms of the cost per mile. With an overall fuel economy rating of 34 MPG, the cost per mile for the Honda Fit is about 13 cents/mile (assuming gas at $4.29/gallon). The Toyota Prius, with an overall fuel economy rating of 44 MPG, costs about 10 cents/mile.

While impressive, I've been doing even better with my electric vehicles (there's more than one reason I've been driving electric for the last 10 years!). My Solectria Force, a professional conversion of a Geo Metro, costs about 2.6 cents per mile. My electric Ford Ranger truck costs about 5.5 cents per mile, or almost half the cost of a Toyota Prius per mile driven. But those numbers assume I'm paying PG&E eleven cents per kWh for my electricity when, in reality, I paid just $49.02 for electricity in 2007. That's right, one year of electricity cost me less than $50 because I've got an ultra-conserving

home and a solar electric system.

Driving an electric vehicle costs less because an electric motor is far more efficient than a gasoline engine. That's one reason why the future of the automobile is heading towards electric drive. Another reason is that electricity, unlike gasoline, can be generated from a variety of renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, hydro and biomass. Within the next two years we'll start to see all sorts of electric vehicles coming onto the market from a variety of manufacturers.

If your daily mileage isn't too excessive – say 30 to 40 miles on average – and you don't need to drive on the highway, there are a variety of vehicles available today. The little Zenn from Feel Good Cars of Canada is my favorite. I've seen several around town recently (congratulations to the Zenn owners out there). You've probably seen the GEM (Global Electric Motorcar) "golf-cart" style vehicles zipping along city streets (Liberty Motors in Grass Valley sells them). The three-wheel ZAP cars (and mini truck) can also be seen around town every now and then.

But this is only the beginning. As energy prices continue to rise expect to see an ever-increasing number of electric vehicles on the road! To see what's available today and coming soon to a showroom near you, visit my web site page here –

http://www.theenergyguy.com/Links_TransportProducts.html

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