

Toyota Prius

The following are actual comments made by Government of British Columbia staff that drove sixty four 2001 model Prius. You are invited to submit your impressions and experiences about your hybrid. PROS

General Experiences

"This car has been well received by our HQ staff and although we can't speak to the technical merits it is quite clear that the Prius was not a "bitter pill to swallow" in the fight to reduce green house gas. This car removes the "perceived" inconvenience that people associate with alt fuel vehicles, it's just a normal car from the users perspective."

"I have been driving a Prius several times a week for almost one year. I think they are great. Comfortable, reliable, great on gas, nice options on the car. Everything I could ask for..."

"I am one of several users of our Prius and find it to be a very capable little car, turns well, does well in highway and in town traffic, can see really well with the larger windshield and I really appreciate how quiet it is. Once you get used to the specific instructions around starting/gassing it up etc it is just as easy to manage as any other car."

Driving Performance

"The mileage is great, and the little darlin' turns on a dime. The computer system intrigues all of the children that I have to transport, and makes it easy for me to change stations on the radio, check fuel and translate kms to miles. A great little car! I have decided it will be my next vehicle purchase."

"I find it to be a peppy little car that handles well on curves. It has good passing ability and is able to get up to speed quickly in order to do this. The steering wheel can be a bit touchy with fairly tight steering control and quick reaction. I like it."

Fuel Consumption

"Our workers really like it and we have found it to be quite a success. Most of the investment is recovered over the lifetime of the vehicle due to the fuel efficiency and enhanced warranty."

"The most noticeable positive feature of the Prius is how economical it is on fuel. It never seems to need refueling."

"The Toyota Prius is awesome! I half expected a vehicle that would be a bit rough, but the Prius is as polished as any of the Toyota's. It runs quietly, accelerates smoothly and gives great gas mileage. On a recent round trip between Penticton and Kelowna (130km) I got 5.2 l/100km. The best thing is it gets the same or better fuel economy in town as it gets on the highway. I am seriously considering a Prius for my next personal vehicle."

"Outstanding vehicle, the gas mileage alone saves a huge amount of money. I keep fairly close tabs and the Prius I drive gets on average 100km. on 4.2 litres of low octane fuel. As well I drive #1 highway from Salmon Arm to Golden all year round and this little car performs extremely well in all types of weather. It is comfortable and a pleasure to drive. I give it a definite A plus. I have worked for the Ministry for nearly 25 years and this vehicle is by far a cut above all the rest."

Winter Driving

"I drove it home through the hellish snowstorm from Harrison. Passing 4 wheel drive jeeps and trucks in the ditch as that grand little car kept creeping forward in white out conditions to get me safely home. I love that car. The fact that is economical and environmentally friendly is ice cream on the cake."

Reliability

"I know it had one mechanical problem which took awhile to fix but I think was covered under the warranty." CONS

General Impressions

"I am afraid to drive it -- a car I can't hear running!!!!"

"My shoulder check left is blocked. I think a number of us experience this. Perhaps it is because females are shorter and the design does not take this into account."

"Don't go through the spin cycle at a car wash. It tore off my rear wiper! The gas station said that it has happened with another Prius too."

"It is my observation that I have to be particularly observant to pedestrian traffic when the Prius is operating at low speeds on battery. It makes no noise. In seniors complexes or areas of high foot traffic pedestrians seem to navigate by listening for the engine noise! So far, I have managed to avoid hitting two paperboys on roller blades who attempted to cross in front of me without looking as they were obviously listening for the engine noise. The driver has to be extremely focused on foot traffic. In senior complexes, they come close to heart attacks walking down the centre of the streets and suddenly there is a car that they couldn't hear, feet behind them."

Driving Experience

"The most un-nerving thing is turning left in front of traffic and hoping it will accelerate quickly. The car starts on electricity and moments later the engine starts to provide the extra needed acceleration. I have also wondered how secure the 277 volt battery is if the car is involved in an accident."

"Tiny tires and susceptible to cross winds. Twitchy steering like a go-cart but easy enough to get used to."

Fuel Consumption

"Filled it up with gas and it seemed to take more than I thought it would, but it probably takes getting used to, like any new car."

Reliability

"Recently, there were starter battery problems - I'd be curious about the life span of the battery and the cost of replacing same."

"The tires wearing off at less than 20K was not good. Also if you don't drive at speed for a half hour or so every week there is a possibility the 12volt battery will run down - if that happens the car is dead (even though there is a completely charged 300volt battery inside it!). I find that the kind of driving I do requires the gas engine to be running most of the time anyway."

Winter Driving Conditions

"It's powertrain may be special, but that's the only thing about it that is. One other thing of note: I don't care for it's performance in wintery weather (ice or snow) and I hope that our Ministry does not make a move towards replacing the rest of our fleet with Prius vehicles."

"We have had to bring the Prius down from the North end of our region because the cost of snow tires for it was prohibitive. Also, there was no service available in Campbell River, so it had to be brought to Courtenay for servicing. Other than that, no problems"

"One of the problems is the tires and their low profile. It is not suitable for logging roads, forestry roads, or unpaved backroads that we sometimes have to access. It is very easy to get stuck in the snow, but usually you can hand shovel enough snow from around the wheels to get yourself moving. Change the low profile tires and find something that provides less bump and shock to the driver encountering a rut!"

Comments By Other Contributors

I have to be very careful if I turn the engine off and wait in my car or else the battery will die because the daytime running lights don't turn off when the engine is turned off UNLESS the driver's side door is opened and closed.

I am very disappointed. Valet drivers don't realize the motor is on and turn it on while the engine is running because there is no noise, so I have learned to turn the air conditioner on HIGH so they can realize the engine is running. I am now faced with a pricetag of \$4,000 from Toyota to replace the main big battery.

The advertised 50 mpg has only been about 38-40 mpg, and I am a conservative driver. I also use the a.c. and heat on the energy saving mode.

In cold weather and ice/snow there was just terrible performance, slid all over the place. In hot weather the Prius overheats too easily, “check engine” light comes on and off without apparent reason or consistency.

I had to replace the computer when the vehicle was about 200 miles out of warranty, which was thousands of dollars. Toyota agreed to help pay for most of that cost since it was so close to the warranty cutoff point. I have had expensive repairs to maintain brakes and, as mentioned, the main battery needs to be replaced now. I have also had 2 little battery replacements at my own cost. The console was replaced several times under warranty but failed to resolve the problem of the ash tray in the back seat constantly falling open.

I would never buy another hybrid. I feel that this purchase was a trap and the benefits/costs were misleading. The savings in fuel does not equal the expense of the parts and labor needed to keep the car running.

