

## 2009 HONDA FIT SPORT



Lots of changes for the second generation Honda Fit. For starters, all dimensions have grown—5 cm more wheelbase, 10.6 cm more overall length, 1.3 cm more overall width, 3 cm more interior width, 3.6 cm more front track width and 2.4 cm more rear track width. Front body stiffness has increased 164%. The Fit is offered in DX, DX-A (a new version with air conditioning), LX and Sport trim lines.

### **Interior and trunk**

The front seats are easy to access but the wide doorsills can soil your clothes. Settled inside, we noted that the cabin is roomier, the front seats have been redesigned, the steering wheel tilts and telescopes, and there's a new driver footrest. The seats are comfortable, but there is no adjustable lumbar support. Headroom and legroom are relatively generous.

Access to the rear is more cumbersome even though the doors open 80 degrees wide. The second-row Magic Seat folds flat in a single motion without having to remove the head restraints. It provides adequate comfort for two people. It is a stand-out for functionality, allowing you to fold each 60/40-split section completely flat in the usual manner or to flip the cushions up and back against the seatbacks to obtain around 120 cm of vertical space.

Considering the size of the vehicle, trunk capacity is good. The floor is flat, the hatch opening is relatively low and the rear door lifts high.

### **Convenience and safety features**

The cabin is very well finished and materials are of good quality. Soundproofing is very inadequate, for all sources of noise. There are several storage compartments, none of which offer any significant volume.

Gauges and controls are well laid out but several controls, and the glove compartment, are not illuminated at night. The heating system provides lots of heat but heats up rather slowly.

The windshield is deeply recessed from the front roof pillars, especially at its base, allowing snow to build up and prevent the wipers from reaching their full scope, which can force the wiper motor. The washer nozzles under the edge of the hood are easily blocked by snow.

Safety equipment includes dual front, side and curtain airbags, antilock brakes and five head restraints including active restraints on the front seats. The three rear head restraints do not adjust high enough for tall people. For the first time, the Fit uses Honda's ACE (Advanced Compatibility Engineering) body structure, which improves passenger safety in a frontal collision with a higher or lower vehicle. Visibility is good, but the double A-pillars can restrict the view for some drivers, especially if they are short, as can the blind zones created by the C-pillars on a three-quarter-rear angle. Headlight range come up short in the low-beam position.

In safety tests by the U.S. government, the Fit obtained five stars out of five for front and side impact protection of front occupants, and four stars for the protection of rear occupants in a side impact. It earned four stars for rollover resistance. The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety awarded the Fit a Good rating, its highest, for driver protection in an offset frontal impact and for side and rear impact protection of all occupants.

### **Engine and transmission**

The new, 1.5-litre, 4-cylinder engine is equipped with I-VTEC technology that electronically controls intake valve timing and lift. Another noteworthy engine improvement, and a world first, is a patterned coating on the piston skirts to improve oil retention and reduce friction. The engine develops 117 hp (8 more) and 106 lb-ft of torque (1 more), which allows the Fit to move along quite energetically. For more vigorous performance you have to maintain the revs above 3,000 rpm. In everyday circumstances torque is sufficient for flexible driving without always having to downshift. This engine meets Tier2/Bin5 emissions standards.

The new, five-speed manual transmission is easy to use, as usual with Honda products. The first four gears are well spaced but fifth should run the engine at least 500 rpm lower. Clutch uptake is smooth.

With the five-speed automatic transmission, fuel economy improves thanks among other things to an eight-kilogram weight reduction made possible by eliminating the spare tire in favour of a repair kit that includes a compressor and liquid sealer. A regular spare is available as an option. The transmission functions well but in the Sport version, it loses its steering wheel paddle shifters.

### **On the road**

Honda's engineers took advantage of the new platform to improve suspension geometry and the electric power steering. Wheel diameter increases one inch, to 15 inches for all but the Sport version, which rides on 16-inch wheels. Though a little more compliant the suspension is still firm. Combined with the relatively short

wheelbase, this firmness can cause a well-felt jounce that sometimes gets almost harsh. Overall, though, the ride is firmly comfortable. Handling is very good, which puts the Fit at the top of its class in this respect. Unfortunately, it is a bit sensitive to side winds.

The electric power steering is well tuned. Directional stability was a bit vague in our test car, perhaps due to the winter tires. The steering provides no road feedback. The turning circle is small. The front-disc, rear-drum brakes lack power in emergency braking but are adequate in normal driving, with good fade resistance.

## **Inspection**

Our inspection at a CAA-Quebec technical inspection centre showed that the Fit's platform is relatively sturdy. Corrosion protection is good but incomplete, with no rustproofing in the middle. Debris can get through a big opening under the front bumper and damage the air conditioner condenser. The engine's overhead camshafts are chain driven.

## **Conclusion**

Along with its trademark functionality and agile handling, the new Fit is more interesting than ever thanks to enhanced interior spaciousness and a more comfortable driving position. The base DX model offers a good price/standard equipment ratio but only four body colour choices.

**PROS:** roominess, functionality, comfortable front seats, handling, road holding, well-adapted engine

**CONS:** soundproofing, headlight range, emergency braking, fifth gear too short, opening under front bumper, wide doorsills get dirty

## **2009 HONDA FIT**

**Engine:** 16-valve, 1.5-litre 4-cylinder

**Horsepower:** 117 hp at 6,600 rpm

**Torque:** 106 lb-ft at 4,800 rpm

**Transmission:** 5-speed manual; 5-speed automatic

**Suspension:** independent/semi independent

**Brakes:** disc/drum

**Wheelbase:** 250 cm

**Length:** 410.5 cm

**Width:** 169.5cm

**Height:** 152.5 cm

**Weight:** 1,119 to 1,176 kg

**Tires:** P175/65R15; P185/55R16

**Maximum towing capacity:** forbidden

**Airbags:** dual front, plus two side and two curtain airbags

**Fuel consumption with manual transmission:**

Natural Resources Canada rating:

City: 7.2 L/100 km (39 mpg)

Highway: 5.7 L/100 km (50 mpg)

Test result: 7.4 L/100 km (38 mpg)

Test temperature: -5°C to 3°C

**CO<sub>2</sub> emissions:** 3,120 kg/20,000 km**Fuel tank capacity:** 40 litres**Fuel requirement:** regular grade gasoline**Acceleration:**

0–100 km/h: 9.7 seconds

60–100 km/h: 6.3 seconds

**Competition:** Chevrolet Aveo, Hyundai Accent, Kia Rio, Pontiac Wave, Suzuki Swift+, Toyota Yaris**Warranty:**

- Full basic coverage: 3 years/60,000 km
- Powertrain: 5 years/100,000 km
- Surface corrosion: 3 years/unlimited km
- Perforation damage: 5 years/unlimited km
- Emissions control system: 3 years/60,000 km (full coverage); 8 years/130,000 km (catalytic converter, electronic control module, onboard diagnostic system).

**Factory replacement parts:**

- Rear bumper: \$652
- Front brake disc: \$93
- Brake pads: \$74
- Muffler: \$281
- Front fender: \$273

**Price according to trim level:**

- DX: \$14,980
- DX-A: \$16,280
- LX: \$17,380
- Sport: \$19,280

**Main options:** none**Price as tested:** \$19,280**Freight and preparation:** \$1,310**Dealers:** Quebec: 61

Canada: 204