

GREEN MACHINES

THE SAVVY GAL'S GUIDE TO THE TOP HYBRID AND ELECTRIC CARS ON THE MARKET.

With gas prices climbing toward \$4 per gallon, and last year's BP offshore drilling disaster driving home the need to dial down our oil dependency, many socially and environmentally savvy lesbians are looking to kick the petroleum habit. Fortunately, there are more environmentally friendly vehicles available than ever before. This is due in large part to the many advantages that hybrid and electric cars offer, both for the environment and our national security. But going green can cost you some green, so you want to be sure that you're making an informed decision. Here's a comparison of the leading eco-friendly models, based in part on the April 2011 issue of *Consumer Reports*, which rates cars on safety, reliability, cost and customer satisfaction; plus, info on how each manufacturer rates on HRC's Corporate Equality Index.



TOYOTA PRIUS



FORD FUSION



HONDA INSIGHT

	TOYOTA PRIUS	FORD FUSION	HONDA INSIGHT
TYPE	Hybrid	Hybrid	Hybrid
PRICE	\$23,050–\$28,320	\$19,720–\$28,645	\$18,200–\$21,490
MILEAGE	48–51 MPG	36–41 MPG	38 MPG
WARRANTY	5 year/60,000 mile power train	5 year/100,000 mile power train	5 year/60,000 mile power train
CR SCORE	80%	80%	54%
HRC RATING	100%	100%	N/A
PROS	Low depreciation value, GPS, rearview camera system and ninth year of production	Price, safety and reliability	Price and ninth year of production
CONS	Reduced rear visibility	Noisy, only in first year of production	Small back seat, slow acceleration and noisy
SUMMARY	Best known of all the hybrids, the Prius is synonymous with eco-friendliness but loses points for its unpredictable reliability—primarily for the reputation it garnered in 2010 when stories of runaway Priuses filled the headlines. However, this hasn't diminished Prius owners' love for their trendy hybrids. Thanks to its nine-year track record it's likely to remain at the top of the hybrid list.	The Ford Fusion is one of the highest-rated sedans by Consumer Reports. The Fusion is equipped with many safety features (limited radio volume, seat belt alerts, low fuel warnings) that make this a good option for households with young or forgetful drivers.	Although Honda has an excellent track record, the Insight has low customer satisfaction, due to the size and the handling of the vehicle. At 38 MPG, Honda lovers would be better off purchasing a non-hybrid Civic, which has comparable gas mileage and price, but ranks much higher (78 percent) on the Consumer Reports scale.

HYBRID AND ELECTRIC CARS MAY COST MORE TO PURCHASE THAN AN ECONOMY CAR, BUT WHEN YOU ADD UP THE SAVINGS ON GAS PRICES ALONE, GREEN CARS WILL SAVE YOU MONEY OVER THE LIFETIME OF YOUR VEHICLE.



CHEVY VOLT



NISSAN LEAF

Plug-in Hybrid	Electric
\$40,280	\$32,780–\$33,720
40 miles electric, plus 260 miles on gas	100 miles on a single battery charge
5 year/100,000 mile power train	5 year/60,000 mile power train
NA	NA
100%	50%
The Volt uses both an electric battery and gas, extending its mobility Plus, it has a longer standard warranty	Emissionless and a \$7500 federal tax credit helps reduce overall price
Price; the Volt is still in its infancy, which means it hasn't been reviewed for safety or owner satisfaction	First generation, so it hasn't been reviewed for safety or owner satisfaction yet and has limited mobility due to battery charge
The Volt has enjoyed lots of media chatter since it was unveiled in 2007, despite the fact that the Volt wasn't available for purchase until 2010. The Volt is different from the Prius because fuel doesn't drive the engine, it simply extends the life of the battery. The high price point makes it less attractive than other models, despite all the media hype.	Electric vehicles are the wave of the future—increased consumer demand will help more models become available, which will, in turn, drive down the price. However, since the Leaf is still in the early stages of development, it is a risky investment at this point—despite the tax incentives to buy it.

WRAP UP

The greening of the auto industry is not a fading trend. There are over 1.6 million eco-friendly cars on the road today, and that number is likely to continue to grow. Hybrid and electric cars may cost more to purchase than many traditional cars, but when you add up the savings on gas prices alone, green cars will save you money over the lifetime of your vehicle. Not to mention being a huge step toward oil independence. Are you ready to make the switch?

For more detailed reviews, check out hybridcars.com, or consumerreports.org.