

## History of Toyota Prius

It is said that competition is a powerful motivator. Toyota Motor Company has continued the tradition of creating and producing automobiles that are not only reliable, but miles ahead of the competition since their first Model AA rolled off the production line in 1936. The latest proof of this is the Toyota Prius.

Toyota's design capabilities and their innate perception of what consumers really need are uncanny. Each new model produced over the years has left its own, unique mark in history from the Land Cruiser to the Corolla to the Camry, and now— it is very likely the Toyota Prius will join them in the ranks of iconic marvels.

The word Hybrid has become synonymous with the Toyota Prius. The Prius became the very first mass-produced gasoline-electric hybrid car, and as of 2011, global sales have reached in excess of 3 million units worldwide. It is indeed a clean, green, driving machine, inside and out. Even the interior of the Prius is green with the use of plant-based eco-plastics instead of traditional petroleum-based plastics.

In 1997, the first Prius was sold in Japan as a compact car. In 2001, it was introduced to the U.S. and in 2004, it was redesigned as a mid-size hatchback. As of 2011, it is the third largest selling car in the world. From the beginning, the standard Prius came equipped with air conditioning, electric power steering, and anti-lock brakes. Being ahead of the game (as always) Toyota designed the Prius as a four-door sedan, making it much more desirable and roomier than that of the sub-compact two-seater Honda Insight, which did not offer their four-door hatchback model until 2009. Does anyone sense a little Corolla/Accord Déjà vu here?

The amenities are seemingly endless, as are the safety features. If you veer out of your lane, the Prius will let you know. If it senses an accident about to happen, it will begin to batten down the hatches. If you need to parallel park, it will take over for you. The car practically drives itself! You may wonder how such a lightweight vehicle measures up to safety. The Prius has received a Five Star rating for side impact, and *Good* for front-end and roof-strength, and in overall impact tests.

The interior is quiet, roomy, and comfortable. Some models even come equipped with a solar powered ventilation system that runs directly off the built-in solar panel instead of the battery, to ventilate the car's interior while parked. Power locks, windows, sunroof, and a futuristic cabin make it all the more appealing. [Energy efficient in every way, even the regenerative braking system converts energy back into the battery pack of the car.](#)

And who says you can't enjoy being "one" with a hybrid car. Leave it to Toyota to make sure you will enjoy your overall driving experience. The newer Prius models offer four power options for different driving modes: Normal, Eco, Power and EV. You are in total

control of the ride. If you want to experience the best fuel economy, then you can choose the Eco Mode. Once you make it off the back roads and onto the freeway, switch it into Power mode for more kick on the expressway or a leisurely drive through the mountains. You can go from 0-60 in about 10 seconds. EV Mode lets you go total electric for the smoothest, quietest ride you will ever experience. What a great opportunity to listen to an Audio Book or to your favorite music while cruising along in your Prius. The state-of-the-art sound system inside an uber-quiet cabin offers the ultimate driving experience.

The latest design offers Drag Coefficient Aerodynamics that guarantee you are getting the most fuel-efficient ride while you are zipping through traffic with as little resistance as possible. This is the same dynamic that is applied to the construction of aircraft, so maybe we are indeed getting pretty close to lift-off sometime in the near future.

As of January 2012, Toyota will begin marketing the Prius Plug-In, but it will only be available in a few states until 2013 when it goes global. As with any past Prius purchase, the Federal Government will offer even more incentives for purchasing the newer models. As to what you can expect to find under the hood—look for a combined 134 horsepower, and the battery pack will feature an advanced lithium-ion technology.

Since 1997, the Prius has received one award after another such as: Car of the Year; Most Dependable Car in the Market; and Green Vehicle of the Year. In 2006, the Monopoly board game replaced their 1920's Roadster game piece with that of the Toyota Prius to reflect the progression of modern technology.

As we move into 2012, the Prius is only going to get better. To date, many automobile manufactures have yet to produce their first hybrid while Toyota is in its Third Generation. Don't be surprised if the Fourth Generation puts us one-step closer to George Jetson's aerocar that he drove to commute between his job and his hometown of Orbit City. It's just a matter of time.

Throughout the years, Toyota's foundation for manufacturing and producing automobiles has afforded them the well-earned reputation of reliability and durability. Although we are still many years away from the final production of the internal combustion engine as we now know it, the Prius offers us the hope that we are one-step farther away from foreign oil dependency, and one-step closer to a more energy efficient automobile and a cleaner environment. Well, what else would you expect from Toyota!

*References:*

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