

Six of the best hybrid and electric cars in Ireland

Here are six of the best electric and hybrid cars on the market today, says motoring journalist Mark Gallivan, and the reasons electric cars are the future.

According to Mary Barra, CEO of General Motors, “We are in the midst of seeing more change in the next five years than we’ve seen in the last 50 years.”

It’s becoming clear that the cars in the future will not be fuelled by diesel.

According to the SIMI registrations of new diesel cars has dropped by over 20 per cent since 2017.

Granted, petrol and diesel engines still account for 93 per cent of new cars bought in Ireland. That said, if you are buying a new car and you’re tempted to change from the diesel or petrol there are big incentives.

Free money

The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) is providing grants of up to €5,000 for new vehicles and a further VRT relief of between €2,500 to €5,000. This saving is taken off the original price of a car and passed directly onto the buyer.

Take the 2018 BMW 530e SE as an example. The original price before an allowable grant for the 2.0-litre petrol/electric (hybrid) 5-Series is €63,500 and cheaper than the €66,850 ubiquitous diesel 530d SE. However, the drive-away price tumbles to €56,000 once the grants are factored in. That’s a saving of €10,850 against the 530d SE diesel engine model. All of a sudden a petrol/electric 5-Series begins to make particularly strong financial sense.

A few golden rules

There are also subsidies for the installation of a home charging station and 50 and 25 per cent discount off tolled roads for fully electric and hybrid cars respectively.

SEAI claims a new electric vehicle will cost 74 per cent less to run per year over a new diesel-powered car.

Before we discuss recommended choices in the marketplace there are a few golden rules of thumb

you should consider. If you are living in a city or town with short commutes and access to a charging station at home and at your workplace, it would be wise to consider a pure electric vehicle. But if you travel greater distances for work then a hybrid is the most credible option. Even if your electric range runs out you will still have a normal petrol engine to drive your car eliminating range anxiety and getting you home without any inconvenience.

Lastly, don't be confused by the term 'mild hybrid' either as it's an inbuilt system that powers the car at very low speeds and often uses a belt driven alternator to drive a car in bumper to bumper traffic.

If you *are* in the market for a new car and tempted by an electrically powered car which ones are the best? These are the top six recommended buys in key market sectors.

Best compact all-electric family car:

Nissan Leaf from €28,690

For: Second-generation Leaf is competitively priced with an electric range extended to 378km. 0-100 km/h in 7.9 seconds. Five-door practicality and is surprisingly fun to drive in e-Pedal (accelerator only) mode. 2,700 Irish sales in first half of 2018.

Against: Polarising looks.

Summary: Best compact all-electric family car out there.

Best electric supermini

Renault Zoe from €23,490

For: Plucky all-electric supermini with theoretical 240 km range. Good visibility with 220 Nm and a sprint to 100km in 13.2 seconds. Domestic home wall-charger included. Achieved 5 Stars in Euro NCAP safety tests.

Against: So-so interior built to a price. Hanna-Barbera looks.

Summary: Ideal entry into the EV world for city folk.

Best electric long-range family car:

Hyundai KONA Electric [from €37,630](#)

For: A driving range of up to 449 kms with a fast charging battery (54 minutes) and a maximum speed of 167 km/h means the all new KONA Electric is an attractive newcomer.

Against: A little steep in price.

Summary: Powerful, practical with strong acceleration.

Best hybrid electric executive car:

BMW 530e SE €56,000

For: Best premium executive car on the planet undercuts 530d diesel sister by €10,850 after grants. All the strong points of a 5-Series, with no sound.

Against: Forget to charge your 530e and petrol economy plummets against the diesel alternative.

Summary: Profoundly tempting proposition.

Most desirable electric compact luxury SUV

Volvo XC60 T8 Hybrid Inscription from €68,450

For: Beautifully constructed with a gorgeous interior. Sumptuous seats. Crammed with thoughtful tech to keep your family safe. It's fast: 0-100 km in 5.3 seconds with 640 Nm torque/390 hp. Ultra-desirable social image.

Against: Ride comfort's a bit soggy. No six-cylinder option.

Summary: Volvo's Hybrid SUV hits the high notes.

Best electric luxury SUV

Audi Q7 3.0-litre TDI e-tron Quattro from €66,970

For: Drives better than Bentley's Bentayga that uses the Q7's platform. 700Nm torque and 0-100 km in 6.0 seconds, yet CO2 of 48 g/km. Majestic interior. Bullion depository build quality.

Against: Electric battery reduces seven-seats in regular Audi Q7 to five.

Summary: Towering inferno of power and premium desirability.