

Gasoline Prices Reach All Time High: Kelley Blue Book Reports Most Fuel Efficient Gas/Diesel Vehicles

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Fuel economy has become a growing concern with gasoline prices rising to an all time high of more than \$2 a gallon in some parts of the U.S. this week, however many consumers are still not ready to make the switch to a hybrid engine vehicle. According to a recent poll, 23 percent of consumers say they would consider buying a more fuel efficient vehicle to combat high pump prices and less than half considered buying a hybrid vehicle as their next car.* That being said, Kelley Blue Book has compiled a list of 2003's most fuel efficient, gas/diesel vehicles.

Most Fuel Efficient, Gas/Diesel, 2003 Model Year Vehicles

Rank	2003 Make/Model	City	Hwy
1	VW Jetta Wagon Diesel	42	50
	VW Beetle Diesel		
	VW Golf Diesel		
2	VW Jetta Sedan Diesel	42	49
3	Honda Civic	36	44
4	Toyota Echo	35	43
5	Toyota Corolla	32	40
6	MINI Cooper	28	37
	Dodge Neon		
	Pontiac Vibe		
	Toyota Matrix		
7	Toyota Celica*	29	36
8	Hyundai Accent		
	Nissan Sentra	28	36
9	Ford Focus	27	36
10	Honda Accord	26	34

"Hybrid vehicles are gaining in popularity, but still only make up less than one percent of the vehicles on the road today," said Charlie Vogelheim, executive editor of Kelley Blue Book. "In the end, a consumer's final vehicle purchase tends to be more of an emotional or aesthetic decision rather than a practical one."

According to the company's Top 50 Most Researched Vehicles list for February 2003, not one hybrid vehicle appeared on the list, confirming that even in the wake of high fuel prices, in-market car-buyers are still not including green vehicles in their consideration set.

The average fuel economy for the nearly 500 vehicles in the 2003 model line-up is 23.5 mpg, a decline from 23.8 mpg in the 2002 model year and 24.2 mpg in 2001. Vogelheim said he was surprised that the Kelley Blue Book list of Most Fuel Efficient Gas/Diesel 2003 Model Year Vehicles included cars with an average city-miles per gallon less than 30. "I think we are moving in the wrong direction," he continued.

A few bright spots on the Kelley Blue Book list are the vehicles that secured the top two positions on the Most Fuel Efficient, Gas/Diesel Vehicles -- diesel fuel vehicles.

"While these vehicles still put out an average level of emissions today, diesel fuel engines have come a long way since the 60s and 70s," said Vogelheim. "Improving diesel engines and lowering their emissions will be a more likely solution in the near term than hydrogen engines or wide-spread consumer

acceptance of hybrids."

Consumers can expect to see more diesel vehicles on the road in coming years as the United States Environmental Protection Agency has set forth new cleaner, lower emissions guidelines for diesel engine vehicle manufacturers. 'Tier 2' standards, as they are called, will be phased in next year, with automakers being fully compliant by 2007.

* Poll results compiled by a Yahoo! Autos/ Harris Interactive survey released February 25, 2003.

About Kelley Blue Book

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SOURCE: Kelley Blue Book

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