



Different Engines, Higher Mileage: Gas-Electric Hybrids Go the Distance

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ince the earliest Model T Ford, engines using gasoline have turned the wheels of America's cars. But now there is an alternative.

Hybrids can boost your mileage by 30% or more over comparable gas-only vehicles—with some models hitting 50 miles per gallon.

Inevitably, high gasoline prices have put additional focus on already popular, high-mileage hybrid cars that combine both a gasoline and an electric engine. Initially, hybrids came only as small sedans. But now, hybrids are moving into SUVs with Ford's Escape the first to market; it is rated for 36 mpg in city driving.

Note, though, that *Edmunds.com* reports that gas would have to top \$5.60 a gallon or you would have to drive more than 37,000 miles a year for the hybrid to be more cost-effective

than a regular Escape.

Toyota—the biggest maker of hybrids—has introduced two hybrid SUVs: The Toyota Highlander is rated for 30 mpg in the city; and from its luxury Lexus division, Toyota is bringing out the hybrid RX440h. Lexus boasts that the RX440h not only is rated at 30 mpg in the city but also accelerates faster than its all-gasoline siblings.

For many people who buy hybrids, it is not just about saving money at the gas pump. It's also nice to know that you may be doing a little to help save the planet from greenhouse emissions. "People are paying an average of about \$3,000 more for hybrids over the gasoline version of the same vehicle," says David Healey, auto industry analyst for Burnham Securities, New York. "But they don't mind because they get that nice warm environmental feeling."

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