



Toyota bZ4X



Tim Saunders is an advanced motorist and journalist. He has always been passionate about motoring and regularly reviews cars from the leading manufacturers. His Youtube channel videos have been watched more than 335,000 times.

Is it sensible to drive a large luxurious electric vehicle during a climate emergency? This is the question I ponder while behind the wheel of the Toyota bZ4X.

As continuing frightening weather events such as boiling oceans and floods persist, the whole idea of the electric vehicle requiring so much energy to build and to charge seems increasingly nonsensical.

I have to keep reminding myself that the bZ4X is a luxury vehicle and therefore drivers having spent over £45,000, demand a certain level of comfort. They want their driver's seat to move forward automatically when they push the start button. They will enjoy using the cumbersome power boot lid, the electric windows, the air conditioning, the heated seats and steering wheel. But the point is that they are not in fact helping the environment by indulging in these luxuries. In my book, cars must be treated like an article or a work of art. "Cut the crap," was a slightly more polite phrase coined by my news editor. Nothing more relevant here. Compromise is necessary if we are to reverse

our dreadful impact on Mother Earth. Being blunt these luxuries are completely unnecessary and should be removed. Ah, but this is a top-of-the-range vehicle, I hear you reminding me. Point taken and I simply cannot see a market for a car like this any more no matter how it is powered. This obese car looks and feels like a larger Lexus. It's bigger than most petrol and diesel vehicles I drive, which in this day and age, doesn't make any sense whatsoever.

Inside, it's pleasant enough but try as I might I can't find a glovebox and I do like one of those. It's comfortable enough while the boot is sizeable, easily swallowing a massive bag of rabbit pellets and eating hay. However, I also find the size of the wing mirrors are way too large and in fact obscure my vision when I look to my right.

I do believe that car manufacturers could make truly efficient vehicles if they wanted to, the technology is there. I see the way forward being small, lightweight vehicles that will travel four or five hundred miles on a full charge. Look back to the Sinclair C5 for inspiration.

Why do manufacturers feel it necessary to go large and luxurious? Bigger is not better.

Reduce the size and remove anything unnecessary and I think there might be a vehicle worth considering. The environmentally conscious motorist will happily drive without environmentally unfriendly air conditioning, just give them a manually operated sunroof and wind up windows - nothing wrong with that, it helps use those oft forgotten muscles, too... They don't need electrically adjustable and heated seats either. Neither do they need a heated steering wheel, they'll happily wear gloves.

"You're meant to get just over 300 miles from a full charge but it's 88 per cent charged and you'll need to leave about 40 per cent of that for the driver to collect it," I'm told as bZ4X is delivered. "I recommend driving it locally."

Facts at a glance
Price £46,110 approx
Power 204bhp
0 to 60mph 7.3secs

Range 317 miles claimed (but you'll never achieve this unless you drive at 30mph all the way!)

Top speed 100mph (you wouldn't want to do it because the range will plummet to nothing)

Watch the video review at www.testdrives.biz