

RAV4 Design: Adding Excitement to the Segment

November 20, 2018

Image not found or type unknown



The 2019 Toyota RAV4 looks nothing like its predecessors, and that is purely by design. The all-new, fifth-generation model brings back a more dedicated SUV appearance, a reflection of both its enhanced capability and of customer desires. People buy SUVs for *emotional* reasons, not just *practical* reasons.

Toyota created the compact crossover SUV segment with the original RAV4 more than two decades ago. An all-new type of vehicle, RAV4 combined SUV capabilities with passenger car ride, handling and fuel economy traits. It was a winning formula, leading to explosive market growth.

In recent years, automakers smoothed out compact SUV design, adopting more passenger car-like traits. Toyota, the segment leader with nearly 408,000 RAV4 sales in the U.S. in 2017, saw a need to break the mold it had cast. Considering that RAV4 is the brand's best-selling vehicle in the U.S., this was no small feat.

“At the very beginning of the design process, we reviewed RAV4's distinct product value and considered how best to evolve the original concept of *‘an off-road vehicle built for urban environments that's a pleasure to drive and look at,’* says RAV4 Chief Engineer Yoshikazu Saeki. “We came to define ‘Adventure & Refinement’ as the design concept for the fifth generation.”

Adventure is the suggestion of being able to drive just about anywhere you want. *Refinement* means a sophisticated design that fits in urban situations.

“Just looking at the new RAV4 ignites the urge to get in and go somewhere,” says Saeki.

He explains that, while Toyota aimed the new RAV4 at young couples, singles or those just starting a family, Saeki also acknowledges that there's a RAV4 for everyone!

New Look, Familiar Face

At first glance, the 2019 Toyota RAV4 looks radically different than its predecessors, and yet there is also quick familiarity when viewed from the front. The grille shape, for example, takes some inspiration from tough Toyota off-road pickups.

It's a look that connotes strength and capability, but for RAV4, this was no mere adaptation. Designers created an entirely new theme, based on everyone's favorite high school subject, geometry. The result is a distinctly carved look, with bold body sculpting to create a “go anywhere” stance.

The sculpted, three-dimensional theme is a dramatic turn away from soft, curvy SUV shapes. It's meant to draw a strong emotional response and a feeling of adventure. That adventure could be heading off on a weekend of hiking or kayaking, or just playing tourist in your own city.

It's about the *feeling* of adventure as much as it is about the experience. Think about it: this is not much different from the emotional response to a sports car design, which is meant to evoke driving thrills even when parked.

Octagons

Those who actually enjoyed geometry in high school will appreciate how the new RAV4 design came together. It was, in a word, *octagons*. Two octagons intersect at a 90-degree angle to create a wide front stance and a look of enhanced utility in the rear. (Utility is actually enhanced, so it's no illusion.) Each body panel has a sophisticated, chiseled appearance that combines athleticism and charisma.

The front octagon shape flows through bold character lines from the doors to the bumper corners, making a powerful and tough impression. Meanwhile, the two-tiered trapezoidal grille enhances the muscular, forward-leaning body, emphasizing its wide and stable stance.

Long, narrow headlamps, framed by a polygonal motif, convey a sense of enhanced width, while line-illumination adds to the sharpness of the front (Actual vehicle width is increased by 0.40 inches.). All gas RAV4 models come standard with Bi-LED parabola headlamps and daytime running lamps. Exclusive to RAV4 HV

models on XLE and above, projector-beam LED headlamps with signature LED daytime running lights (on XLE and above) produce a more premium light source.

The octagonal silhouette of the rear body mirrors that of the front. Similarly, a trapezoidal shape radiates from the license plate garnish and flows across the rear combination lamps and through the bumper and tires towards the front. This “cross octagon” modeling creates an iconic motif, establishing a presence that stands out, excites, and invites.

The result is a design that emphasizes SUV character while looking nothing like the boxy, utilitarian shapes of past SUVs.

Lift Off

A critical element to the new RAV4 design is the “lifted up” look. While actually lowering vehicle height by a fraction (0.20 inches), the designers have created the feeling of riding higher. That, too, is no illusion. Road clearance has actually been increased by over a half-inch.

The lifted-up look is emphasized by the black lower body that flows from the side and runs up towards the rear. With their polygonal motifs, the wheel arches appear to hold the tires from a high position, emphasizing the lifted-up body and drawing attention to the vehicle’s capability. This theme is seen most prominently on the Adventure and Limited grades, with their 19-inch wheels and the Adventure grade’s large black overfenders. At the rear, the protective parts and muffler are arranged to produce a clear appearance and sense of stability.

In line with the “Cross Octagon” theme, polygonal shapes are seen throughout the interior, expressing a sense of unity with the exterior.

Aerodynamics: Form with Function

RAV4 is not all about form; there is enhanced function in the aerodynamics, including the slight reduction in vehicle height. The angular rear combination lamp design not only suggests stability, it *contributes* to stability via aero stabilizing fins on the outer lenses. The new shape of the exterior door handles also help out in that regard. At the rear of the roof, a large spoiler and side fins contribute to aerodynamic performance.

Aerodynamic enhancements are at work even where one can’t readily see: a full under cover for enhanced aerodynamic performance, for example.

Color Me Adventurous

The 2019 RAV4 design uses color to spark emotions. To accentuate its rugged persona, the Adventure grade can be ordered with an Ice Edge-colored roof (at an extra cost) that is paired with one of three exterior colors: Midnight Black Metallic and Blue Flame are both new for RAV4; Lunar Rock is new to the Toyota lineup and makes its first appearance on RAV4. Lunar Rock conveys sophistication and strength, evoking off-road imagery, and the two-tone arrangement takes inspiration from Toyota’s FJ-40 Land Cruiser and more recent FJ Cruiser off-road icons.

The RAV4 XSE HV’s look is unique, too, with piano-black accents across the front end, mirror caps, fender arches, and lower rockers to convey a refined urban image. The Limited grade connotes sporty elegance with silver trim, unique gray metallic-colored grille, 19-inch alloy wheels and chrome accents.

RAV4’s available full-body exterior colors:

• Super White • Blizzard Pearl* • Silver Sky Metallic • Magnetic Gray Metallic • Lunar Rock • Midnight Black Metallic • Ruby Flare Pearl* • Blueprint • Blue Flame	Two-tone options available on RAV4 Adventure grade only: • Lunar Rock with Ice Edge Roof* • Midnight Black Metallic with Ice Edge Roof* • Blue Flame with Ice Edge Roof*
	Two-tone options available on RAV4 XSE HV only: • Blizzard Pearl* with Midnight Black Metallic Roof • Silver Sky Metallic with Midnight Black Metallic Roof • Magnetic Gray Metallic with Midnight Black Metallic Roof • Blueprint with Midnight Black Metallic Roof

* Extra-cost color