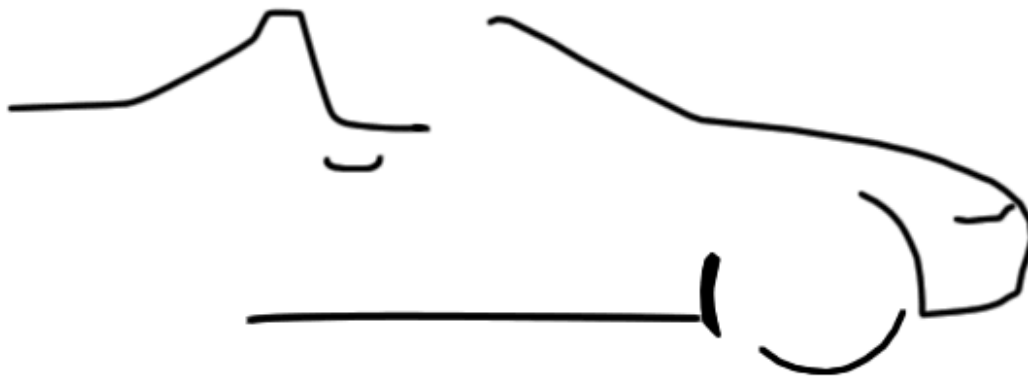


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# Del Sol Buyers Guide

[By the members of DSOC]

Courtesy of Scrom/Delsol1



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# Del Sol

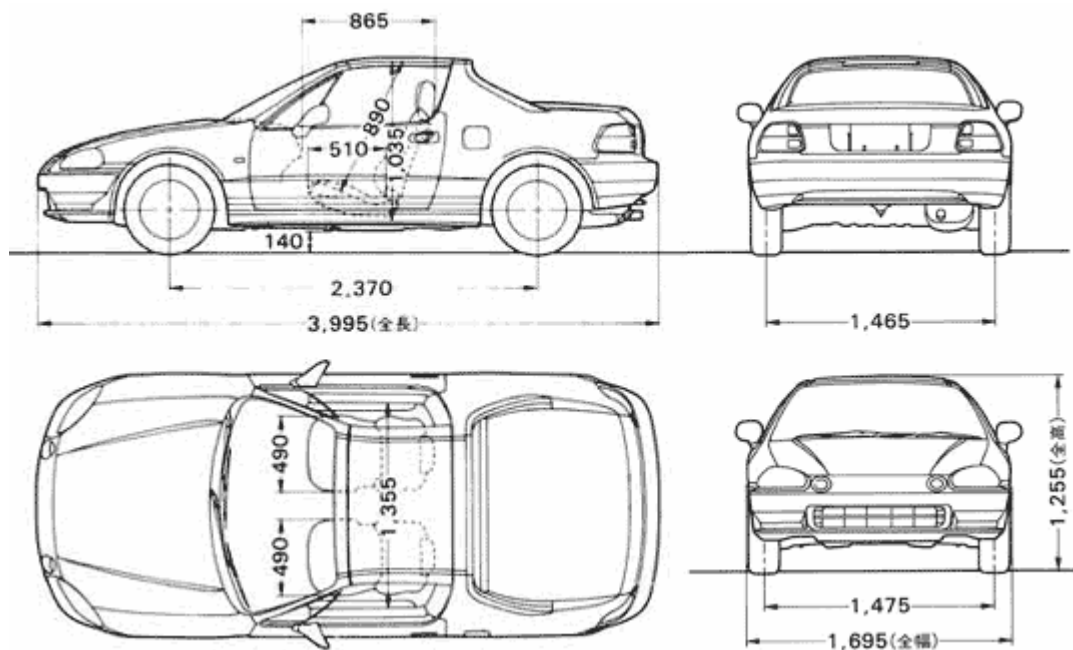
## [THE BUYERS BIBLE]

It could be said, that most buyers reading this are looking for either a minted car or are looking to fix up whatever they do get, So in order to help in the decision making process DSOC members have compiled this list of points to watch for, things that you may need to spend extra money on or to consider when looking & buying.

Apart from the usual used car checks - e.g. geometry, paperwork, brakes, electrics, even tyre wear, overall condition, noises etc...

Specific things to look for (that can all be solved):

This is relatively exhaustive but not complete - there may be other things missed as these cars get older.



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## **Interior/Cabin**

### *Water:*

Wet carpets/smell of damp inside/covered up with strong air freshener.  
(Check for water stains on the sides of the seats). This should tell you whether the roof is leak prone already - it can be fixed

Guide here: [Guide](#)

a less common issue is where water runs in somewhere near the bonnet/door hinges, behind the dashboard and under the driver/passenger carpets.

Guide here: [Guide](#)

### *Moving plastic parts:*

Check the ashtray lid - often broken (but can be fixed with bits from a biro)

Guide here: [Guide](#)

Check the lighter is still in there.

Glove box handle, glove box hinges, door handles and map lights (option on some) - all these get brittle and can break. The door handles may not be visibly broken, check to see if they're loose when you open the door and that the locks work correctly.

If broken, replacements for all these are not common on eBay and not particularly cheap from Honda but they are still available (for now).

See if the stereo cover works - it's spring-loaded. It can be fixed if not actually cracked and the parts are there but often the springs and mounts come loose after someone fits an aftermarket stereo or immobiliser. Fixing this involves removing the centre console. A relatively easy job once you've done it a couple of times.

### *Interior Trim:*

Check the roof towards the back for rips & scuffs where the TT loads in and out.

Check the driver & passenger interior armrests/door cards - the trim often comes away and may eventually split in the crease here.

Replacing/removing the door cards is relatively simple once you know how to do it but repairing the split may require a re-trim.

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Door card removal info here: [Guide](#)

## **Controls/Electrics**

### *Air conditioning*

If installed, Check the air con works (properly) and is nice & cold - if not, because of the age of the car, it'll need a gas conversion \*and\* re-gassing (not expensive but not a home fix job). Kwik-fit & many garages won't do the gas conversion however some mobile air con specialists will and it's actually not that major. Expect to pay ~£100 for conversion plus gas.

### *Fan & Heater:*

Check the fan control and heater control all work - particularly the fan on all speeds.

If the fan doesn't work on some speeds - particularly on the models with a 4 speed fan, the fan resistor mounted behind the glove box has probably burned out. The resistor on many of these is very crude and fixable/replaceable if broken but worth knowing. No guide at the moment but many on here can advise.

If you have variable speed climate control, it's a more complex resistor setup but less likely to break.

On cars with climate control (variable speed fan rather than 4 speed), with the air con on and the stereo off, listen for a buzzing behind the drivers seat below the rear speaker grille. Annoying isn't it!

It's a noisy fan and can be fixed easily either by cleaning the fluff off it or just disconnecting but worth knowing about. If you look behind the drivers seat below the rear speaker grille there is a small ~1cm square grille on the panel, behind that is a little fan that collects dust and buzzes. You have to take a few panels out to get at it.

Centre panel, then speaker panel, then the one below that, the fan is screwed to it.

You may have to take the seat belt off from the floor for better access.

Take the fan apart and either use an old toothbrush to clean it, use an air blower to blow the fluff out or just disconnect it.

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### *Lights:*

Check the annoying thing you see on loads of cars like indicating dims the tail and brake lights etc.

For an import, check there's a rear fog light and that it works and that the switch lights up - potential MOT failure.

### *Windows:*

Check all 3 electric windows work properly - when the back window goes down, check that the green indicator LED on the dashboard lights up. More importantly, when you close the window check it switches off otherwise for those with a TT roof, it may not work (there's a safety interlock between the roof and rear window).

### *Mirrors:*

Check that the electric mirrors both work. If you find a button anywhere in the car for either heated mirrors or electric fold-away mirrors, count yourself lucky, this is an incredibly rare optional extra (above & beyond the standard electric mirrors).

### *Aerial:*

If it's an electric one (probably is) does it work or has it been broken. For a whole replacement electric aerial you usually won't see change from at least ~£100 however if the motor still works, you can find replacement masts on US EBay for significantly less.

### *Main relay:*

Probably not one you'll spot but if there's evidence or a history of starting problems when warm, this is a common fault of the PGMFI main relay.

If you're electrically minded, it's a home fix by soldering a dry joint on the relay. Otherwise, you can just get a replacement.

Guide is partway through the posts in this forum thread:

[Main Relay Guide](#)

### *Central Locking:*

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Most del sols should have central locking. Many don't work though.

If the car has an aftermarket alarm with remote locking, this may have been solved using additional actuators,

if not, see if it works. The simplest solution is to install remote central locking instead. Otherwise, try the team on the forum for support.

### *Alarm/Immobiliser:*

Very recent (P-reg) Sols may have a factory immobiliser (a chunkier rubber OEM Honda Key with a chip in the key).

For the remainder of us, we'll hopefully have some form of aftermarket security. (Yes the cars are old but they are desirable and easily stolen without security as one or two owners on the dsoc forum can confirm).

For an aftermarket alarm/immobiliser, check the thatcham certificate is there for insurance savings and check the system works, find out if there's any history of batteries draining or similar and that the alarm install looks to be a good job. A shoddy alarm/immobiliser install can be a real pain otherwise.

## **Boot/Trunk**

### *Toolkit*

Check there's a toolkit & Jack (seriously). The jack mounts into a little space in the side near the rear lights but parts of the jack will be in the toolkit.

If buying a transtop, see if the toolkit contains parts of the emergency roof kit.

If these are in the boot, it's a very smart idea to move them to the drivers side rear storage bin so that you can actually get to them if you have problems - it's pointless having them in the boot if it won't open!

The contents of the emergency roof lifter kit are as follows.

In the rear storage bin behind the driver seat you should find a black plate with Allen key sized holes in it,

Also:

A drive wire (a black wire with ends like a Speedo drive wire)

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An Allen key handle for the plate to allow you to turn it

*In the boot:*

A large allen key handle approximately 10 inches in length, (used to move the roof catch arms back and forth)

*Under the carpet:*

Check the state & existence of a spare wheel under the carpet.

Check for a pool of water under the spare wheel or a wet carpet.

Water/damp in the boot is quite common but good to check and resolve.

Guide here: [guide](#)

With a transtop some water drips in when you open & close the boot after it's been raining so don't panic - we're looking for something more significant and you can generally see watermarks on the metal where it is coming from...

## **Bodywork**

*Rust:*

Look around the front & back of all 4 wheel arches, it tends to bubble through - it can be fixed and even worst case rust in these areas can be cut out, new welds put in and painted over.

Another very common rust area is under the side sills.

Other rust areas to watch are:

- Around or under the roof seals,
  - around the bumper mountings,
  - along the top metal edge of the doors behind the window seals,
  - around the aerial hole,
  - around the wing mirror mountings
- The rear arch inner lip (the most difficult part to fix in my opinion),  
Door check behind the rubber seals.

*Paint:*

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Check for peeling lacquer on assorted panels and fading paint; particularly problematic on imports as the damage is often done by being parked in strong sunlight.

Red del sols famously start to turn "Milano Pink" with age - a "feature" of the original Honda paint.

Check for pink paint and various non-matching coloured panels.

As far as I know once the paint has gone \*really\* pink, it won't polish out but others could correct me if I'm wrong.

Some colour restorer may temporarily resolve.

The above issues may mean you'll need a re-spray for either of some panels or the whole car.

Generally this is the biggest single piece of work you'll likely do on a sol if restoring.

Other than rust checks, dents & dings...

#### *Doors*

Check the doors open & close snugly and properly (they can be adjusted and there was an early fault recall to fix this - easy enough to do at home though).

#### *Trim*

Check for any missing trim. There's some little rectangular bits of trim on the roof rear arch - make sure these are secure.

### **Engine bay & mechanicals**

#### *CV joints, Drive shaft boots/gaiters:*

Every Civic I've owned including the Sol has these go regularly so check for grease spray from these up to the back of the engine bay on each side as a sign that one has split.

If test driving, steer on full lock each way in reverse and listen for a clicking from the front. This means the CV joints will need work shortly (or sooner).

#### *Oil leaks:*

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Check the usual locations for oil leaks as you would on any car.

If you can spot where the v-tec solenoid is (top left side of the engine block I think), that may have a leak - this is a cheap fix - don't worry about that one too much but it can get mucky. There may also be leaks from the crank shaft or cam shaft oil seals or from the rocker cover - particularly if the car has a higher mileage. Again, fixable and not too much of a worry but needs to be fixed.

#### *Strut brace:*

On an unmodified SiR, you should see a standard Strut-brace across between the 2 suspension points.

Aftermarket ones are often added to other models

#### *Rocker cover:*

If it's a B16A engine (VTI or SiR), it'll say DOHC and VTEC on it and the HT leads run through the middle of the rocker cover (there may be a cover over them). On the D series engines (1.5 and 1.6 v-tec SOHC), the rocker cover is much smaller with the 4 HT leads visible on the top.

The paint on the cover will probably be peeling - not to worry about that.

#### *Distributor:*

With the engine running, listen closely to the distributor for grinds & rattles. I looked at one that made some worrying "clucking" noises which coupled with overall car condition put me off in a big way.

Distributors on del sols \*do\* consistently seem to go after ~60,000 miles. One of our site sponsors sells replacements but don't expect to pay much less than £100.

#### *Radiator:*

Civic radiators usually go within the first 10-12 years in my experience. I believe Sols are the same; they're ~£100 to replace.

See if it's been replaced. If not, check to see how badly mashed it is. There'll be a few dings that don't give problems but once the coolant gets replaced after a service, give it a good test before planning any long journeys.

#### *Lights:*

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Check the aux light and headlamps aren't loose; these mountings can get brittle and break.

If they are, they may still be ok but good to be aware of in case the lights are really loose and risky for an MOT.

### *Brakes:*

A problem that seems to be becoming more prevalent is sticking/seizing brake callipers.

Check the condition of the brake pads and brake disks for overall wear, heavy scoring or heat damage. When test-driving, give the brakes a good test.

If seized, the callipers can usually be stripped down and overhauled but not a job for the non-mechanically minded. Alternatively replacement callipers can be bought (at ~£100 per corner- or much more from Honda!)

Whilst at the front end of the car and under the bonnet, don't forget to check the condition of the edges of the fan belt - this is often a general indicator for how well maintained the car is.

### **Underneath:**

#### *Seal/Rust:*

If imported, Check if it had the under body seal done when imported (it should have done).

Check for rust under the drivers floor around the pedal area

Also check for heavy rusting or damage around the fuel tank and oil sump - especially important to check on lowered cars.

#### *Exhaust:*

Check the exhaust for leaks/blowing/holes.

Civics get through exhausts a lot I'm assuming Sols are the same - fixable but worth knowing about.

Also remember a Japanese catalytic converter from an import is a different length to a UK one so when getting the exhaust done, it needs to be the right length.

One for most old cars with a cat - check for an eggy smell, that's the cat on its

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way out. I think on a K-reg or earlier, you could actually get the cat removed but I've been told that without it, the emissions may be borderline on the MOT. This may depend on general car & plug condition etc though.

Also listen for rattles and noises from the cat or exhaust. This might be a cat problem or may be loose/broken heat shields. All fixable or removable.

## **Roof**

### *Seals:*

Check the seals - if they're perished, it's not the end of the world but not cheap to fix if you actually want to replace them.

(Previous group buy thread here: [here](#) )

Some repeated heavy dosing of silicone grease will restore their water tightness significantly.

### *Transtop:*

If you're buying a Transtop, Check the TT works - get them to show it in action.

If you're brave, a broken TT may be ok for you to buy and either fix yourself or take to a specialist (don't go to Honda unless you really have to). PM Maria on dsoc as her husband Derek is a genius with transtops and fixes and services them part-time (D's Auto Electrical).

Don't expect it to always be cheap to fix but it's well worthwhile fixing and servicing the roof - it'll give years of fun afterwards.

Often if there's a roof problem and it's never been looked after before it'll be the tilter cogs to try first - if you're willing to spend time, these can be replaced yourself (not for the faint-hearted)

Guide here: [guide](#)

The complete transtop guide is available from the "guides" link on the main site page: <http://delsolownersclub.co.uk/>

Check all 3 handles are intact and that the roof comes off and goes back on ok.

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Going back on, the boot may struggle to lift with the roof in if the motor is on its way out but again, solvable for a price (the boot motor needs a strip down and overhaul).

With the roof off, look round the seals and at the tilter for general condition and any rust spots.

Many of the tilters are missing a rubber cover meaning that they rub on the roof - these can be bought from Honda

(part # and info here: [link](#))

Also, each side of the tilter unit, there should be 2 triangular pieces of plastic - just cosmetic dust covers. These are often missing - nothing to worry about but nice to have.

#### *Manual Roof:*

With the manual roof, as with a TT, check the seals & rust and that the handles are all intact, also check the boot has a rack to mount the roof and that the boot struts hold the boot up properly.

Finally for either roof (but more the manual), check it's not been dropped or damaged.

### **Driving**

#### *Engine Warning Light:*

When starting the ignition, check the amber engine management light comes on briefly and switches off again and doesn't flash warning codes or similar.

If it doesn't come on or flashes (rather than switching off) this may be hiding a more serious engine issue - either honestly as a blown bulb or dishonestly as a deliberately disabled bulb or similar.

#### *General:*

Check for wobbles, noises etc - the usual.

Some higher speed wobbles (usually between 50-80mph) might just be the wheels needing balancing.

As mentioned previously, check the brakes are sound.

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For imports, find out if it's had an MPH conversion and if the speedo and trip read in KMS or Miles or a mix of the two and see if the owner knows if the speed limiter is still in or not. (Speed is limited on imports to 180KPH/112MPH)

### *Temperature gauge*

Not actually a common problem on sols but whilst you're looking - check the temperature needle reaches the halfway mark when warmed up and even when pushing the car relatively hard doesn't go shooting up. This could be a coolant or radiator problem or more likely the thermostat (this is a simple cheap fix). There's a how-to on the forum for the thermostat.

### *Gearbox:*

For a manual - given the age & mileage you're likely to need some clutch work done. A replacement clutch will cost around £220 -£250 fitted. That's what it cost me anyway. Higher mileage ones tend to have synchromesh problems (grinding between second and third) but usually only noticeable when giving it some beans on a clear road.

On the Auto, even with a high mileage, gear changes should still be pretty smooth.

I've not had problems with Honda autos so I'm not sure what it'd feel or sound like if the torque convertor was on its way out – perhaps more insight needed here.

Manual and auto - Don't forget to drive it in reverse and listen/feel for problems.

### *Water:*

Yes-more water!

When cornering, listen for the sound of sloshing water somewhere behind the seats. This is a blocked drain.

It can be fixed but isn't a quick job - guide here (from Geo - Team Sol Washington): <http://www.teamdelsolwa.com/howto/drainblock.htm>

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### **Paperwork**

Things to look for on the history:

Service intervals.

Timing belt change - given the age of the car, it'd be nice to see one at ~50-60K and another one much more recently but to be honest I'd only expect to see the first change unless it's someone from the owners boards.

How often tyres & brakes were changed (a sign of how hard it's driven).

If the distributor has been replaced.

If the pgmfi relay has been fixed or replaced. (Easy fix if not but may not actually ever be a problem).

Any bodywork fixes.

Any signs that the transtop has *\*ever\** been serviced or mended. If so - good!

### **Parts & repair prices**

I spotted a US site with prices in dollars for common del sol repairs; radiator, brakes etc but that's not a lot of help for those in the UK. We will try to bring you a price guide as part of our site overhaul.

The other big problem is prices change so often that it's hard to keep things accurate. Garage & re-spray prices also vary a lot depending on location, quality, mates rates, DIY etc.

Easiest thing is to poll people for the cost of specific things.

From the list of things I had above, none except the re-spray is individually expensive as the parts are generally reasonable now but the big cost is the labour if you're not doing things yourself.

Roof cogs are about £30.

A re-spray can be anything from £250-600 at "mates rates" to £1500 upwards at a good body shop but as many here will say, you usually get what you pay for.

Roof seals, I understand anecdotally are anything up to £600 for a full new set and until recently were only available from Honda dealers. You could source

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some from other CRXs being broken but usually they're pretty tatty by that point. One of our members recently found a third party supplier

Forum thread here: [link](#)

Exhaust - back box probably around £100 but if you're doing the exhaust, its recommended to go for a lifetime stainless steel one for £200-400 depending on what you have. This is probably the one thing I'd do to a car even if I were keeping everything else stock.

Radiators look to be around the £80-120 mark.

Distributors - check one of the site sponsors on here they do a good deal.

Broken bits of trim vary wildly in price but are rarely more than £40 and often £5-15 - eBay is your friend here - parts come up regularly from breakers for most things but if you're really stuck (and loaded) most parts I believe are still available through Honda.

CV Joints & boots are around £40-70 for parts if you find a good priced supplier but this is not a job I'd choose to do myself, others on here have done... pulling the driveshaft / joint apart is not easy.

PGMFI relay - probably £20-40

The stereo cover and ashtray are definite DIY fixes with no new parts involved.

Retiming - if you want to go down that route is a whole subject in itself - search the forum for details and examples.

Air con gas conversion & re-gas - about £100

Rust cut out & weld - not much assuming you'll be having a re-spray at the same time I've heard of quotes from £150/corner upwards

Water leaks - a DIY job, check various posts and how to on dsoc forum.

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Aerial - either painfully expensive - over £100 if you go for the full motorised replacement - or relatively cheap if you can get on US eBay and find the guys that sell replacement masts on their own and assuming they're willing to ship to the UK

### **Models, features & price guide**

*Transtop Vs Manual - your choice:*

Maintenance on the TT is generally a concern for those new to the Sol but not actually that bad. Once broken & fixed, they just need regular maintenance. Although the boot space in a TT is theoretically reduced significantly, it's plenty big enough for a 2 person weekend camping holiday, over £100 grocery shopping, or a set of golf clubs plus some room left over.

I have the roof down at pretty much every opportunity because the TT is so easy.

If I had the manual roof, there's probably a few times where I couldn't be bothered.

The other thing with the manual roof is be careful not to drop it!

None of the models are particularly slow so any model is worth a shot.

If you're looking for 0-60 speed, that will narrow your choices, if you want a gorgeous car, any model is good - that's why we're all on this forum!

There are other differences between the different years and models in terms of features that are worth having / not having or at least being aware of.

Depending on your taste check for things like whether the mirrors and door handles are colour coded or not, whether you have air con or climate control etc.

The rarer sols are those around the equivalent of a P plate - e.g. the most recent - these often have some typical "facelift" type extras too.

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*Features:*

Later sols don't usually have the cool round aux lights but some still do.  
Later models have traction control and airbags whilst earlier ones don't.

Early UK Models had ABS as an option which became standard later.  
Earlier Japanese ones don't have ABS don't but later ones do.

Particular rare features to keep an eye out for are:

"gathers" rear speaker grilles

Tweeters factory installed above the door handles

"lower" front fog lights

Factory installed lip or body kits

Original Mugen Body kit parts

Limited slip differential.

Factory fitted leather interior

I'm sure there's a few more.

One thing about the imports vs. UK ones is that if they're relatively recent imports, they're likely to be less rusted than an equivalent age UK car due to the Japanese not salting roads in winter but as others have said, the insurance on imports can sting. Give Adrian Flux insurance a call and see if they can give numbers for an ESI, VTI, VGI, VXI, SIR etc).

*Models & Engines:*

ESI = 1.6L V-tec SOHC UK Model (128bhp)

VTI = 1.6L V-tec DOHC UK Model (160bhp)

VXI = 1.5L V-tec SOHC Japanese Import (128bhp) - yes, 128 bop from 1.5 plus cheap tax!

VGI = 1.6L V-tec SOHC Japanese Import (128bhp)

SIR = 1.6L V-tec DOHC Japanese Import - top of the range. (170bhp manual, 150bhp auto (unconfirmed))

In the US, there were also S, Si and VTEC Models - less info on those here for now though.

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European models were (I believe) the same as UK models but Left-hand-drive.

#### *Auto Vs Manual:*

The automatic gearbox versions are usually significantly cheaper as they seem to be less desirable however if you're looking for one they're generally harder to find. Recently I've seen more than in the past. The Auto gearbox is a 4 speed box on all models and I believe although the SIR is 170bhp for the manual it's only 150bhp for the auto. (This information is second-hand so I don't know for sure).

The manual gearbox is a 5 speed and for most these days, I'd expect to see some work having been done on the clutch & cylinders - if not, expect some (depending on mileage).

#### *Prices:*

Prices for buying & selling are basically on demand and condition

- e.g. perceived value & desirability rather than "book value".

Glass's guide values a Sol at ~£1000 clearly this doesn't match what we see in the market.

There's an open discussion on the forums at the moment that at least for the first half of 2008 prices seem to be much more variable than in previous years.

As it's a convertible, demand for them is seasonal - as the weather gets wetter demand for them falls although at the same time, less will come up for sale.

September-October and May-June are the 2 buying/selling peaks that I've seen. Prices are particularly low in December/January, start to rise from March, peak during June/July and although many come on the market in September, prices start to fall from October.

For a manual, the price range usually is about £1000 to £4000 (4k from an importer, car dealer or mint condition & heavily modified). Most generally good condition ones are in the 1600 to 3000 area depending on who you buy from and what time of year. You *\*can\** pick them up cheaper if the owner's after a quick sale, if there's known issues/work needing doing of if the owner

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isn't particularly an enthusiast. I've seen quite a few recently go for under 1200 or even under 1000.

For an auto, the overall price range is about the same but with the average prices I've seen for those I've watched being in the 1500 to 2500 area instead.

If you're willing to be patient or to buy out of season, you should be able to pick up a minted one with a relatively low mileage for under £2500. If it comes from someone on the owners boards, you may pay slightly more (it still depends) but expect a better car for your money.

### **Where to buy?**

Last thing to consider is what style you're after - relatively stock or heavily modified.

I like mine stock which actually means good condition ones are \*much\* harder to find - most really good condition ones have been modified to some extent. Really well looked after ones (stock or otherwise) will usually come from people on boards like DSOC.

Other than the for sale section DSOC, a good place to look is piston heads – there is usually loads on there.

<http://pistonheads.com/sales/list.asp?s=624>

And of course eBay and auto trader.

When searching on eBay, it's well worth looking for both "CRX" and/or "Del Sol".

You'll find a few del sols listed as CRXs and civics - these get missed by a lot of people and potentially go for cheaper as a result.