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QUICK FACTS
Price Rs 6.13 lakh
(ex-showroom, Delhi)
On sale Now

A dash of sport

The Etios Liva TRD Sportivo gets a stronger engine and sporty body kit. Is that enough to make it a hot hatch?

FIRST VERDICT

A good shot of performance but still not quite a hot hatch.

★★★★★☆☆☆☆

SO GOOD

- Responsive engine
- Space and comfort

NO GOOD

- Not involving to drive
- Expensive for what you get

PHOTOGRAPHY: SOMDATTI N. HAWKAR

CONTRARY TO WHAT you might think, this Liva TRD Sportivo isn't just about a sporty body kit and fancy wheels. While Toyota did sell such a car as a limited edition some time ago, this time round, this variant comes with one crucial difference. Under the hood is the more powerful 89bhp, 1.5-litre petrol

motor from the Etios saloon and all the updates (apart from the beige interiors) that the regular Liva has just been given.

The question then is, does the TRD Sportivo qualify as a proper enthusiast's car, or is it just a dolled up Liva with a fancy name?

Historically, sporty hatchbacks haven't proven very popular here – VW has discontinued the Polo 1.6, Skoda has done the same with its Fabia 1.6, and the only other 'hot' hatchback before them was the 100bhp Fiat Palio 1.6 GTX; we all know what happened to that one.

Toyota isn't expecting the Sportivo to set the sales charts on fire. No, the Sportivo exists for the sole reason of injecting some spice into the Liva's rather dull image and going by looks alone, you can't miss the sporting pretensions. What you could miss is the rather meek (by hot hatch standards) 89bhp power output, which is about the same amount the

Brio's 1.2 motor produces! However, when you factor in the Liva's bantam 925kg kerb weight, it translates into a promising power to weight ratio of 96.2bhp per tonne. This figure is very close to the Polo 1.6's 96.3bhp per tonne.

It's also a ratio that results in a pretty impressive 0-100kph run of 11.88sec. Compare that to the Polo's 11.62sec and the Palio GTX's 11.1sec times and you'll see the Sportivo is a fairly 'warm' hatchback when driven flat out. The motor is very responsive thanks to a healthy slug of low-end torque, and power delivery is quite linear. The mid-range is strong too and the engine pulls reasonably well, if not as enthusiastically as a Honda motor, to its redline. The 1.5 Sportivo motor is identically geared to the regular 1.2 Liva and the 1.5 Etios and hence the extra power makes the Sportivo feel a touch low geared. This has its benefits; the Sportivo is quick off the mark and darts to



89bhp motor feels responsive.



Sporty badge for a not too sporty hatch.

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The sporty body kit and smart alloy wheels improve the looks, but you still can't get away from the car's basic boxy shape.



Seats get stitched TRD Sportivo logo.



Some expected equipment missing.



Spacious and functional cabin; sporty looking flat-bottomed steering wheel gone.

60kph in a sprightly 4.79 seconds, which is a touch quicker than the Polo 1.6. It pulls cleanly from low speeds in almost any gear, and this makes it very easy to drive in the city. As a result, you don't need to change gears frequently, and even if you do, you'll love the five-speed gearbox's light, short throws.

The Liva's twin-cam motor is not the smoothest or the quietest around, but there's no doubt the improvements to the Liva's noise, vibration and harshness package has improved things.

Still, a proper driver's car is not just about performance, but also how entertaining it is from behind the wheel, and this is where the Sportivo's distinctly non-sporty nature starts to show. Toyota hasn't tweaked the bits that could have turned a capable hatch into a great driver's car – namely the chassis, suspension, steering and brakes. The steering rack, for

example, is low geared and has about four turns lock-to-lock, and the steering itself is lifeless and has a strange, inconsistent feel to the way it weighs up.

The suspension is a straight carryover from the regular Liva and doesn't have the damping characteristics of a hot hatch. The larger 185/60 R15 tyres have improved grip but the Sportivo has a fair amount of body roll and a certain numbness in the handling that doesn't encourage you to drive it quickly. The ride is pretty decent on uneven surfaces, though it doesn't feel as settled as a Polo. But there is less road and tyre noise now, thanks to the improved insulation, and the suspension feels quieter too.

The Sportivo tries to play the part with a body kit that includes sportier front and rear bumpers, side skirts, a rear spoiler and handsome smoked grey alloy wheels. There are changes to the cabin too, namely that black

dashboard and front seats that have the TRD Sportivo logo on them. It gets all the bells and whistles of a top-end V SP Liva, and that means the two-DIN audio system with USB and aux ports, power windows and two airbags. It doesn't get climate control or powered mirrors though. Surprisingly, the Sportivo comes with a perfectly round steering wheel rather than the sportier-looking flat-bottomed wheel that the regular Liva gets. What's more, the bigger engine means it doesn't qualify for the government's small car excise benefit, so it's priced at Rs 6.13 lakh (ex-showroom, Delhi). That isn't particularly great value, considering it's missing equipment expected in a top-of-the-line hatchback.

So, in the end, the Sportivo misses the mark by a fair bit. Sure, performance is decent and it does look more attractive than the regular Liva, but these characteristics fail to hide the fact that the Liva is

essentially a practical hatchback. Picture your school headmaster wearing a racing suit and you'll know what we mean.

AMEYA DANDEKAR

TOYOTA ETIOS LIVA TRD SPORTIVO

Price	Rs 6.13 lakh (ex-showroom, Delhi)		
L/W/H	3775/1695/1510mm		
Wheelbase	2460mm		
Engine	4 cyls in-line, 1496cc, petrol		
Power	89bhp at 5600rpm		
Torque	13.46kgm at 3000rpm		
Gearbox	5-speed manual		
Brakes (f/r)	Ventilated discs/ drums		
Tyre size	185/60 R15		
Kerb weight	925kg		
Fuel tank capacity	45 litres		
Acceleration (from rest)			
Kph	(sec)	Kph	(sec)
20	1.12	80	7.61
40	2.55	100	11.88
60	4.79	120	17.14
In-gear acceleration			
20-80 kph (in 3rd gear)		11.42s	
40-100kph (in 4th gear)		17.72s	