



SHAPUR KOTWAL

## The year of the Yaris

This is Mr Average, a car that does almost everything reasonably well

The Toyota Yaris sedan is finally in India, a Honda City and Hyundai Verna rival. Toyota will commence production of the car at its plant in Bidadi near Bengaluru later this month, available with both manual and automatic versions. Because the car is locally produced, Toyota is likely to price it competitively, alongside the City.

### Look at it head-on

The big black air dam makes the nose of the car look sporty, the headlights and badge gel nicely and the sweep of the roof is well executed. On the road, the Yaris looks smaller in the flesh than you expect. It is: its 4,425mm length and 2,550mm wheelbase are smaller than that of the City, which stretches the tape at 4,440mm and 2,600mm. Even the 15-inch wheels look a size down.

The sedan is based on Toyota's global 'B' platform, but differs from the car sold in Europe and other markets. Whereas that car is called the XP130, this built-for-developing-markets car is designated 'XP150'. The ride height has been raised for Indian roads, and it now gets taller springs and stiffer dampers. Toyota engineers have added acoustic glass windows, and additional sound-deadening material to help reduce engine and road noise. Putting out a decent 107hp, the 1.5-litre petrol is mated to a six-speed manual or a seven-step CVT automatic.

It comes with a class-leading seven airbags, including a knee bag as standard, on all variants! There are disc brakes on all wheels (on the V and VX



Covering its bases The Toyota Yaris • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

### SPECIFICATIONS

**FUEL TYPE** Petrol  
**ENGINE INSTALLATION** Front, transverse  
**CUBIC CAPACITY (CC)** 1496cc  
**MAX POWER (HP @ RPM)** 107hp at 6000rpm  
**MAX TORQUE (NM @ RPM)** 140Nm at 4200rpm

versions), ESP, traction control, and some versions even get a tyre pressure warning system.

### Driver driven

The engine is smooth at idle. There's almost no rocking motion when you place your foot on the throttle, and it is very responsive to that first important tap on the accelerator. So, drive it in a relaxed manner and performance feels effortless. However, ask for a bit more acceleration and it disappoints. The engine is slow to respond, revs build at a leisurely pace and progress is so relaxed, you soon start looking for a lower gear. Power and performance do eventually begin to trickle in, and by 4,000rpm, the engine is pulling much harder.

The six-speed manual does a decent job. It is reasonably light to engage gears, only needing an extra nudge or push occasionally, and though the spring-loading on the

gear lever is a bit high, selecting gears doesn't take too much effort or attention. The clutch is nicely weighted too. The CVT automatic is even nicer. There's also a 'manual mode' via the paddles behind the steering.

### Ride quality

There is a hint of firmness at lower speeds and you can feel the stiffness in the springs when the car rolls over sharp-edged bumps, but once up to speed, comfort is impressive. The ride is silent; there's no secondary movement even over larger bumps, and you can carry a lot of speed over craters, with the Yaris remaining stable and not tossing passengers around like the Verna and City do. Even straight-line stability is good, and with its disc brakes on all four wheels (V and VX versions), you feel pretty secure at high speeds.

It isn't really a fun car to drive. Yes, stability is good, the strong brakes allow you to carry a bit of extra speed into corners, and it does hang on gamely once you are in the corner. The steering, however, feels vague and lifeless; there's almost no connection with the front wheels as speeds rise and cross triple-digit figures, and the Yaris feels even more nervy doing relatively everyday things like changing lanes.

### Getting inside

The cabin, its beige-and-black scheme and 'waterfall' centre console, works well. Using the powered driver's seat to find your ideal driving position makes it feel like it is from a class above, and the range of adjustment is wide. The cabin is typically Toyota, reminding you in places of its bigger sister, the Corolla: The layered

dash, the chunky steering wheel, the bulging doorpads. But there are a few new elements that stand out. The backlit instrument panel with its 4.2-inch colour TFT screen looks attractive, the soft-touch air-con buttons function with a slickness that's very pleasing.

Levels of fit and finish are not class-leading though. There are plenty of hard and unyielding plastics on the dash, and the lower down the cabin you go, the worse it gets. The touchscreen with its myriad gesture controls is a nice addition, but the car doesn't have Apple Car Play or Android Auto. The boot is also reasonably large at 476 litres.

There's a fair amount of legroom, the seat base is long, the backrest is reclined and the cushioning on the part-leather seats is spot on. Headroom is a bit tight if you are over 6ft tall, and though it does have a good back seat, it isn't as nice as that of the City. The Yaris isn't fun to drive or have the best cabin quality, but it is a car that will deliver an above-average performance in almost all important areas.

