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● CAR REVIEW: TOYOTA YARIS

A sedan that bucks the trend

The Yaris is not a 0-100kph sprinter, but a marathon runner; it doesn't have a blistering acceleration through the gears, but the ride is sure-footed

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OVER THE LAST TWO decades, Toyota Yaris has gained global reputation for its five attributes—contemporary design, expansive comfort, superior ride quality and quiet cabin, good efficiency and potent performance, and class-leading safety and technology. You can add a sixth—credible value for money, Toyota Kirloskar Motor, which will launch the Yaris sedan in May and has opened the bookings, has priced it Rs 8.75 lakh onwards (ex-showroom, all India). To find how good is the car, I recently drove it near Bangalore.

What is the Yaris?

The Yaris—named after Greek goddess Charis who embodies beauty and elegance—was developed for the European market in 1999, but soon found success across the world. Today, it is sold

in 120 countries, manufactured at six plants, sells over 300,000 units per year, and is available both in hatchback and sedan body shapes.

Which cars does it compete with?

Toyota will launch the sedan body shape of the Yaris in India. It will take on the mighty trio of Honda City, Hyundai Verna and Maruti Suzuki Ciaz; its other competitors are Volkswagen Vento, Skoda Rapid and Nissan Sunny.

What defines its design?

The design of the Yaris appears to be inspired by the Corolla Altis (there is almost no similarity with the unimaginative-looking Etios). Its prominent design features are projector headlamps, LED line guides in headlamps and tail-lamps, LED rear combi-lamp, daytime running lights, shark-fin antenna, and piano-black interiors with a shade of white.



How inviting is the cabin?

Like all Toyota cars, the cabin is spacious. The company has used the HSEA (High Solar Energy Absorbing) glass for windshield and windows, which blocks ultraviolet and infrared rays (for the rear glass, there is a sunshade); it also reduces a lot of outside noise. This results in very good AC efficiency and a quiet cabin. A few convenience features include rear-seat armrest with cup-holders, leather uphol-

stery, steering-mounted controls, keyless entry with push-button start, and adjustable headrests for all passengers, among others.

While front passengers get both USB and 12V charging slots, rear-seat passengers get two 12V charging slots and no USB—it doesn't make sense; few people carry 12V chargers, most use USB.

The driver gets powered seat, touch-screen navigation audio with phone connectivity, parking sensor display and other

features. There is good space all around and the rear floor is flat, so three people can sit in comfort. Roof-mounted air vents for rear passengers uniformly cool the cabin.

Which engines power it?

Unlike the competition which gets both petrol and diesel engine options, the Yaris will be available only in petrol, to begin with—it's the proven 1.5-litre dual VVT-i motor, mated to either the seven-speed CVT or the six-speed manual trans-

mission (CVT gets paddle shifters).

How does it drive?

Unlike the spirited/sporty drive of the Ciaz/Verna, the Yaris drives in a balanced, linear fashion—it's not a 0-100kph sprinter, but more like a marathon runner. The Yaris doesn't have a blistering acceleration through the gears, but the ride is sure-footed and comfortable, even on bad roads. It gets all four disc brakes with anti-lock braking system (ABS) and electronic brake-force distribution (EBD).

What all safety features does it have?

Safety appears to be big focus for Toyota, and it has tried to make the Yaris as safe as possible. Even the entry-level variant, priced Rs 8.75 lakh, gets as many as seven airbags. In addition, ABS with EBD is standard. As you go up the variants, you get features such as tyre-pressure monitoring system, vehicle stability control, hill-start assist, front and rear parking sensors, rear camera, impact-sensing door unlock, automatic headlamps...the list is long.

Is it a good buy?

The Yaris is available in four variants—J, G, V and VX—with both manual and CVT options in all four. The J manual is priced Rs 8.75 lakh and the top-end VX CVT touches Rs 14.07 lakh. Its closest competitor is the City petrol (Rs 8.72 lakh to Rs 13.7 lakh, ex-showroom, Delhi). The Verna petrol is priced from Rs 7.81 lakh (1.4-litre) to Rs 12.56 lakh (1.6-litre). And the Ciaz petrol (1.4-litre) starts from Rs 7.83 lakh to Rs 10.63 lakh. Of all these, the Yaris appears to be the most equipped and feature-rich, including in safety features. Toyota knows its customers will accept a small premium on the 'value' they are getting.