

National – May, 2018

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MOTORING

MAY 2018 ₹ 125 WORLD

TOYOTA YARIS

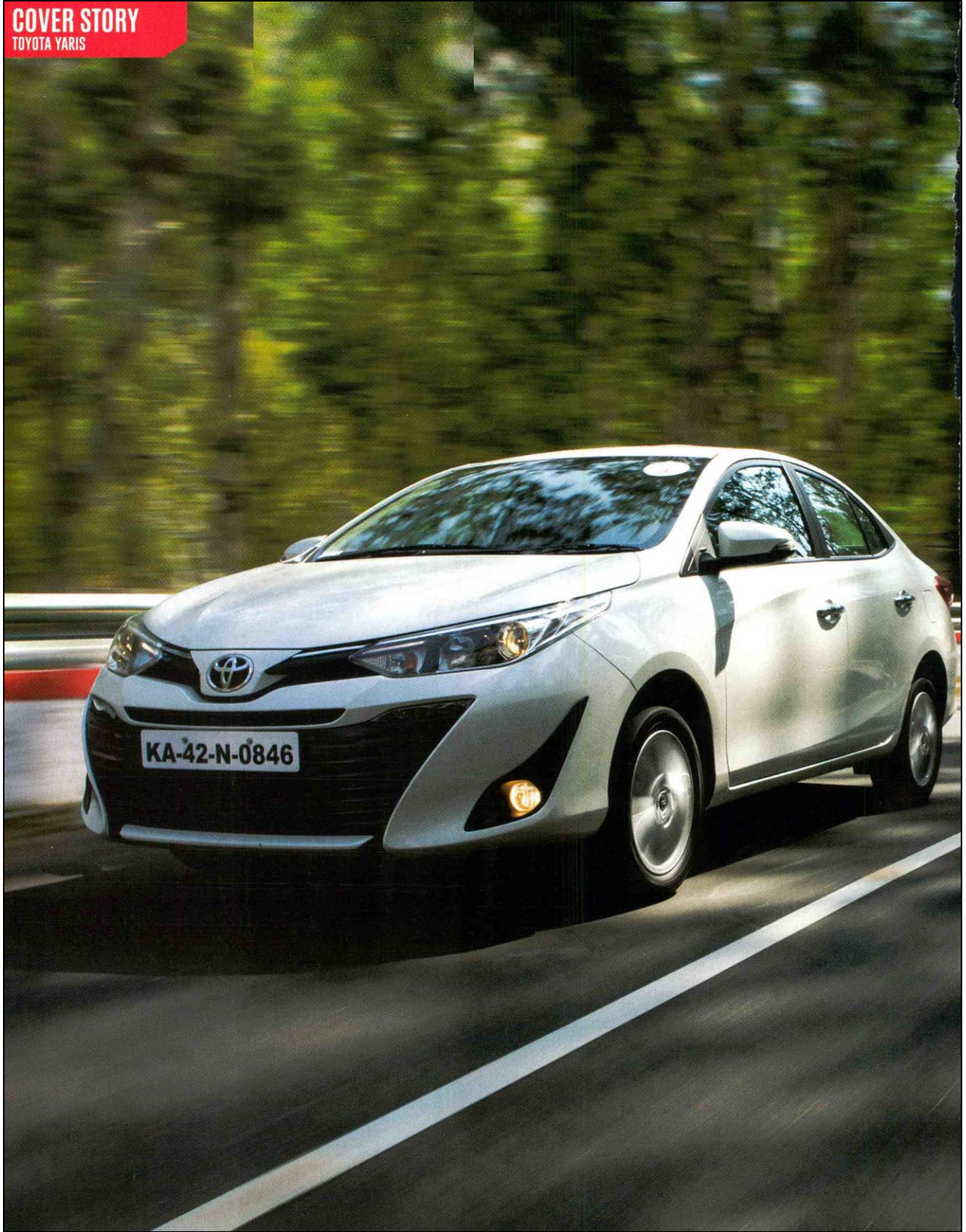
IS THE LATEST PREMIUM SEDAN CHALLENGER ALSO THE GREATEST?

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COVER STORY
TOYOTA YARIS





HIYA RIS

WE GET ACQUAINTED WITH TOYOTA'S
ASSAULT ON THE PREMIUM-SEDAN SEGMENT

By KYLE PEREIRA Photographs KARTIK WARE

Before we get into this first impression drive of the Toyota Yaris, I will introduce to you the cars that it will compete with. They are, in no particular order, the Honda City, the Hyundai Verna, the VW Vento and the Maruti Suzuki Ciaz. I have done this in order to set up the sort of tall benchmark this Toyota needs to meet, and then go beyond for it to create its own space in the segment. Now let's get into it, shall we?

The first thing I noticed about the Yaris as I walked towards it is how busy the front styling is. It's not ugly, no siree, but it just has so much going on, slashes here and chrome there. But in contrast, the sides of the car look

completely barren, a couple of creases along the flanks and that's about it. All of this adds up to a front that seems to be at odds with the rest of the car. If you get one, make sure you park it with the nose facing outwards if you want to be seen as a person who likes to stand out. Or park it with the sides showing if blending in is more like your thing. Toyota wanted the Yaris to appeal to everyone, I suppose.

As soon as you get into the driver's seat, Toyota's 'waterfall'-inspired dashboard greets you. Despite being artistically challenged, I can see where they get that from. Sitting atop the central console is the infotainment system which, apart from sporting a touch-

screen, can be operated using hand gestures that are to be made not more than a couple of inches from the sensor perched on the top left of the unit.

You need to place your hand in front of the sensor for a couple of seconds till you hear a beep which tells you that the system has sensed it. Then, waving your hand up and down, and this way and that, is supposed to increase and decrease volume, sift through frequencies for the radio and cure carpal tunnel syndrome, among other things. Okay, the carpal tunnel bit was made up. I tried it, but it wasn't as perceptive as I thought it should have been. I had to keep moving my hands for it to do anything remotely close to what I wanted



The 'waterfall'-inspired central console is great to look at but keeps jabbing the driver's left knee



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Roof blower is all about cabin air circulation

from it, and I am sure it must have been amusing for onlookers to watch me through the windows trying to exorcise the audio system repeatedly.

Speaking of windows, the front windshield of the Yaris is impregnated with a coating that, according to the company, reduces the sun's infrared radiation entry into the cabin by 30 per cent as compared to normal glass. Toyota also claims that the glass cuts the UV radiation coming into the car by up to 50 per cent. All of this adds up to a reduced load on the air-conditioning system and therefore, along with a more comfortable cabin, supposedly reduces fuel consumption by a significant amount.

The Yaris will be available with two gearbox options; one being a 7-stage



CVT and the other a 6-speed manual. We got the CVT and instead of following the chalked-out route, the rebels that we are, decided to veer off track and head from the Bangalore airport towards the famous Nandi Hills.

On the highway, the Yaris is quite comfortable. The best thing about this car is its ride quality. Expansion gaps, speed breakers and potholes try their best to faze the Yaris, but the Toyota's supple suspension simply soaks all of that in without transmitting it into the cabin. Heck, the ride quality of the Yaris might compare with — and even exceed — some cars from higher segments. Just the right thing for the executive looking for a chauffeur-driven ride, then.


For the back-seat drivers, there is

ample room, both for the head, shoulders, elbows and feet unlike the driver's seat where the centre console kept jabbing my left knee. The rear occupants also get a roof-mounted blower which pulls in cool air from the front area of the cabin and funnels it towards the back. Make no mistake, this blower is not connected via ducting to the actual air-conditioning in any way, but its effect is remarkable nonetheless.

From the driver's seat, however, the Yaris is a different animal. The 1.5-litre four-pot motor puts out a healthy 106 horses and 14.5 kgm. When I push the pedal all the way to the firewall, the speedometer needle moves upwards at a respectable pace, but the sensation of hard acceleration is somehow missing. The paddle shifters tend to iron out

some of the niggles, but on the whole it is as if the CVT acts like a bottle neck, severely cutting down the power being sent down to the front wheels for forward propulsion. This phenomenon could be narrowed down to the way a CVT works, utilising a belt mounted on two expanding pulleys to provide varying ratios that substitute actual gears. The slippage is significant, but CVTs are way cheaper than other autos and one can see why Toyota chose this transmission over the others — to keep the costs down.

You see, costing is the prime reason — apart from increased fuel consumption — a lot of manufacturers have chosen to go with automatic manual transmissions rather than an all-out automatic transmission. The AMT is



It will definitely not disappoint those looking for a good city commuter

basically a manual transmission with a solenoid that engages and disengages the clutch instead of your foot as you go through the gears. And in auto mode, the AMT does the same thing with the clutch, but in addition also shifts through the gears according to the engine revs. As of today, AMTs aren't even remotely as smooth as full autos in terms of gear shifting, but who knows what tomorrow brings. And now I shall end this tangential tirade and get back to the nice white Toyota sedan I was talking to all of you about.

Yes, the initial acceleration of the Yaris is slow, but once the car had built up pace, it was not bothersome at all. Unfortunately, this was not an opportunity for a proper test drive and so I

do not have any acceleration figures to validate this observation with, instead relying solely on the dyno contained within the seat of my pants. This lack of low-end punch became even more apparent the moment we began the climb to Nandi Hills. Despite trying all the possible permutations of throttle inputs, the Yaris just wouldn't get up and go.

Downhill, the Yaris felt better, the engine being helped along with the momentum. I took a few corners at speed, and despite a mild understeer, the Toyota went in the general direction I wanted it to. The suspension did feel a tad soft, but this is no sportscar and since it imparts such stellar ride comfort, all is forgiven.

While I was chucking the Yaris along, I also noticed how light and effortless the steering was. This might not give you the loaded feel that enthusiastic drivers crave, but in the traffic snarls that afflict most cities in India, this is a boon. No matter how ardent the enthusiast within us might be, we'd rather be stuck in traffic in a car like this than an uncompromising supercar. Trust me on this.

What other manufacturers must learn from the Yaris is how Toyota has chosen to shod all its variants with the same spec when it comes to the things that matter. All models of the Yaris will come with seven airbags. After all, one can live without a fancy audio system, especially in the event of a crash, but

without airbags it could be another story altogether.

So how does this car compare with the competition? Well, for me to be sure, it will need to be driven back to back with the others to give you all a thoroughly conclusive answer. But from the looks of it, the Yaris will definitely not disappoint those on the lookout for a good city commuter. It's got the right amount of room in the places that matter (boot included) and plasticky dashboard aside, is reasonably plush inside. Oh, and again, that ride quality is to die for! Those of you who are still not convinced and prefer numbers to words, I suggest that you wait for our shootout of the Yaris versus the competition that is inevitable! //

AUTODATA

TOYOTA YARIS

POWERTRAIN

Displacement: 1496cc, i-4, petrol

Max power: 106 bhp@6000 rpm

Max torque: 14.5 kgm@4200 rpm

Transmission: 7-speed, CVT/6-speed, manual

TYRES

F/R: 185/60 R15

DIMENSIONS

L/W/H (mm): 4425/1730/1495

Wheelbase: 2550 mm

Kerb weight: 1090 - 1135 kg

Fuel capacity: 42 litres

PRICE

₹ 8.75 - 14.07 LAKH (ex-showroom, Delhi)

