



A bridesmaid maybe, not the bride!

It was a long time coming. Toyota has not fared well at all in the entry-to-mid level hatch/compact sedan/sedan segments in India with the bulk of its sales coming from Innova followed by the Fortuner. The Etios and Etios Liva (launched as Toyota's contenders for the C2 and the B2 segments) have found acceptance more as taxis, and with the Corolla Altis moving into a much higher price point (meaning lower sales), that left a yawning hole in a market that Toyota was finding tough to crack. The last 3-4 years have seen an increasing crescendo that Toyota will plug this gap with either the [Yaris](#) or the [Vios](#) being launched in India. And finally, at the 2018 Auto Expo, the Yaris was the one that was unveiled. "Yaris" is derived from "Charis", the singular form of "Charites", the Greek goddesses of charm and beauty. With a polarising design, a host of features, and only a petrol mill, will Yaris be able to crack the code for Toyota in this highly competitive segment? We drove both the manual as well as automatic variants to get a sense of Yaris. While the legendary Toyota bullet-proof reliability is a major plus point, will it be able to stand up to competition?

Design language – polarising or boring?

Earlier generation Toyota vehicles sported subtle or boring designs, and never looked aggressive. But in the last two years, we have seen Toyota designers add a lot of sharp styling cues and aggressive cuts to the Corolla Altis, Fortuner, and even the Innova. But surprisingly, with the Yaris, Toyota has opted for a more conventional approach. While I was told that the front portion mimicked that of the Corolla, for some reason the feeling that this is more like a big brother to Etios and Liva than a younger sibling to Corolla Altis just doesn't go away. While that in itself isn't a let-down, I would have thought that Toyota would have preferred to go with a sharp style to woo customers given that the Yaris is pitted against bestsellers like Maruti Ciaz (a powerful upgrade coming soon), Hyundai Verna, Honda City, plus also-rans like the VW Vento and Skoda Rapid. The Yaris is built on the common 'B platform', which underpins other global Toyota models. This third-gen model was launched in 2013 globally and received a major facelift in 2017. The Yaris appears to be a bit smaller than its rivals in length and even has the shortest wheelbase. It is also a pretty heavy car.

To get over the similarity to the Etios on the upper grille part, Toyota has done a bit of overstyling. So between these two styles, the front looks are a bit polarising. Some found it looking futuristic, while others thought it was overdone. While the small smiling grille with the Toyota badging is the centre piece, there is a much-larger black lower grille with multiple horizontal slats, with the foglamps ensconced in a black alcove and two tiny DRL strips (only on the top end) sitting on top of either end of the lower grille (seem more like an afterthought). The large swept-back headlamp unit does provide an aggressive look and bulge on the sides; but the lights are not LED. Thank god, the use of chrome has been restricted to just the badging, the slim strips on the upper grille, and the headlamp inserts. Else, it would have been a sure overkill.

Toyota Yaris – tech spec comparo

	Toyota Yaris\$	Maurti Ciaz^	Honda City	Hyundai Verna
Average Monthly Volumes - Sales				
Avg Monthly Volumes	2,100	4,200	3,800	4,100
Dimensions				
Length (mm)	4425	4490	4440	4440
Width (mm)	1730	1730	1695	1729
Height (mm)	1495	1485	1495	1475
Wheelbase (mm)	2550	2650	2600	2600
Ground Clearance (mm)	175	170	165	165
Turning Radius (m)	5.1	5.4	5.3	5.2
Boot Space (ltr)	476	510	510	465
Fuel Tank (ltr)	42	43	40	45
Kerb Weight – Petrol (kg)	1120-1135	1010	1058-1107	1095
Kerb Weight – Diesel (kg)	-	1115	1147-1175	1158
Tyres	R15	R15/R16	R15/R16	R15/R16
Engine				
Fuel	P	P/D	P/D	P/D
Transmission	MT/CVT	MT, AT/MT	MT, CVT/MT	MT, AT/MT, AT
Size (ltr)	1.5	1.4/1.3	1.5/1.5	1.4P, 1.6P/1.6D
Power (bhp)	106	91/89	117/99	99, 121/126
Torque (Nm)	140	130/200	145/200	133, 151/260
Fuel Efficiency (kmpl)*	17.1/17.8	20.73/28.09	17.4, 18.0/25.3	17.8, 17.1/24.75, 21.02
Price (Rs Lakh, ex-showroom, Delhi) – MT Petrol				
Base	8.75	7.83	8.77	7.90
Mid	10.56-11.70	8.28-8.92	9.75-10.00	9.20
Top	12.85	9.48	11.89	9.81-11.52
Price (Rs Lakh, ex-showroom, Delhi) – MT Diesel				
Base	-	9.5	-	9.60
Mid	-	9.94-10.79	10.99-11.79	10.42
Top	-	11.51	13.09-13.82	11.50-12.86
Price (Rs Lakh, ex-showroom, Delhi) – AT Petrol/Diesel				
Base	9.95	-	-	-
Mid	11.76-12.90	9.94-10.79	11.73@	10.66@/11.85#
Top	14.07	10.63	13.03-13.76@	12.66@/13.00#

Source: IIFL Research *claimed #Diesel @Petrol

^ New model coming up with bigger engine, more power and features

\$ Yaris sales are an avg of 3M YTD (launched in April) - others are 6M avg YTD



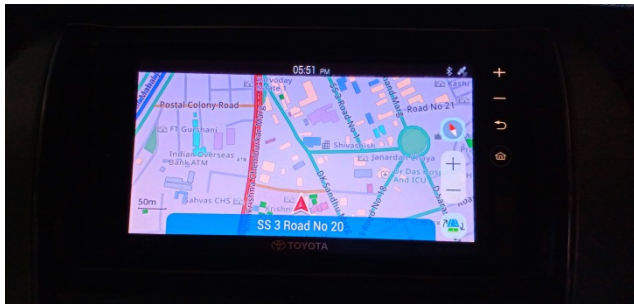
The front three-quarters is surely the best angle to view the Yaris. Despite the overstyled front fascia, I liked the hint of muscle shown by the creases on the bonnet. And the headlamp cluster does look nifty with the twin projectors inside and the turn indicators nestled below. Move to the sides and suddenly all the drama of the front comes to a grinding halt. When viewed from the sides, you see a car that's been kept clean and simple. No dramatic creases, no sudden kinks in the shoulder line, and 15" radials that look a size small for the wheel-well – bigger wheels are not offered even as an option as is the case in other markets, and that is disappointing. There is no sunroof on any variant (a miss in my view) and ORVMs are dual-tone (but not auto folding). Only the top end variant gets chrome handles while other variants get body coloured ones. A black cladding on the C-pillar seems more like a finishing touch. While the boot is nicely integrated, the rear end looks pretty bland when compared to the styling upfront. There is not much of character (particularly when compared to the front), but I quite liked the shape of the split tail-lamps.

Pretty good interiors

Ingress and egress are quite comfortable given how wide the doors open, and also the height of the roof and the floor. The doors give a robust feel, and don't seem as light as what one encounters with the Ciaz, City, or Verna. While headroom and legroom upfront is sufficient, the cabin seems narrower than what competition offers. It is a dual-tone interior that greets you, and beige makes the cabin seem warm and fresh, while the large glass house all around adds to the brightness, and aids in all-round visibility. The quality of plastic all around feels nice, although hard. Fit and finish is at par with what is available in the segment, while the seat fabric/leather and some parts of the doorpad feel nice to the touch. The dashboard is functional and logical in its layout – the black and beige theme is complemented by some silver inserts, while piano black surrounds for some areas and the faux stitching pattern on the top of the dash give a premium feel (some may not agree).

While cruise control is offered, maybe manufacturers should offer features like auto dimming for the IRVM – cruise control can be given a miss. Given how morons drive with high beam, auto dimming is much needed in India – for the IRVM and for wing mirrors too. The leather-wrapped steering with thumb contours feels good and chunky to hold, and has decently sized buttons for various functions. But the steering can only be adjusted for rake, and not reach, even in the top spec – this is a major miss in my view. Some of my friends have a very relaxed and laidback style of driving (even within this city in chaotic traffic), and they will be the ones to curse Toyota for this omission.

The 7" touchscreen infotainment system sits on top of the centre fascia, and comes with a remote control and SatNav, and further supports a host of play modes. However, surprise, surprise: Android Auto and Apple CarPlay – the most important ones in this day and age – have been left out! While the touchscreen is very intuitive to use, there is a definite lag, even though touch sensitivity is pretty good. Also, like in the earlier XUV 500s, there is a problem when direct sunlight falls on the screen – visibility gets hampered. As is the case with the new XUVs, Toyota needs to provide a visor/cap over



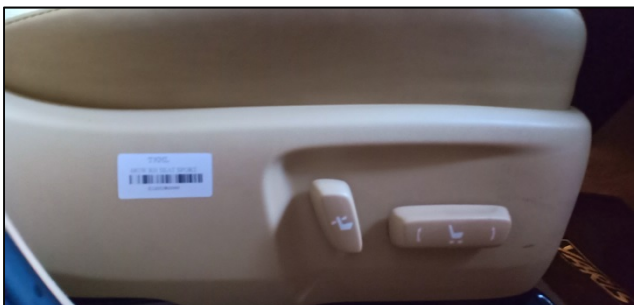
the screen so that visibility improves even when it is very bright outside. One interesting feature is “gesture control” (only in the top variant) – no need to touch the screen to change tracks, volume, etc. The flick of your hand in the direction will do the needful. How cool is that! In the SatNav booted up by MapMyIndia, while the standard disclaimer comes at the start, you don’t have to press ‘OK’ or ‘continue’ to use GPS. The message disappears shortly unlike certain other systems where it stays irritatingly. Voice commands are available to operate multiple functions, but the system doesn’t always understand what the user is saying. The touchscreen doubling up as a rear view camera display offers no guide lines (not even static) while reversing. While camera display quality is average, what one gets to choose is a focused view from the rear view camera. Cool!



The chrome-ringed engine start button is backlit in blue, but a large and ugly plastic piece covers up the place where the ignition key slot of the lower variants will be. The neat instrument cluster (with LEDs for backlighting) consists of three chrome-lined dials – a small tachometer to the left, a large speedometer in the centre, and a dummy dial to the right (but with a box within that shows plenty of data). Numbers and needles are backlit in white. A 4.2” colour MID with a hi-res display sits in the lower right corner. Two weird and ugly stalks stick out – these are to adjust the clock. The large and easy-to-read MID has multiple readings, while gear position is also displayed in the CVT variant. However, a temperature gauge is missing. MID also shows current and historical fuel consumption – you can even see average fuel efficiency for the last one year! There is even a savings calculator in INR, *a la* Innova. Additionally, it will display your three best driving performances based on fuel consumption.

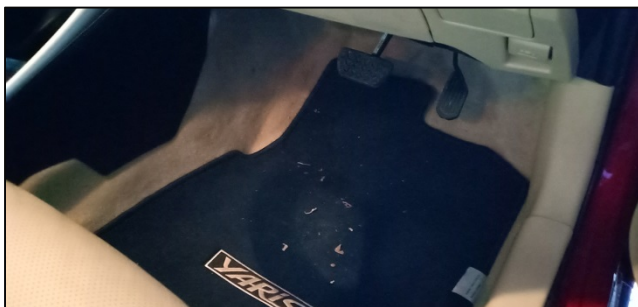
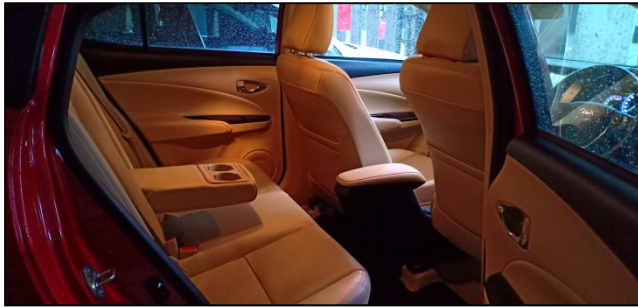


The centre armrest has a soft surface in leather (fabric covered in lower variants). But, neither is it adjustable and nor is it useful – the placement is too far behind. This is another disaster. The centre armrest has a deep storage compartment underneath. There is a slim area next to the handbrake for your smartphone, and a 12V charging socket located right behind that slot. The sunvisors are fairly simple, but don’t feel flimsy. The glovebox is medium-sized and comes with a small compartment to store the remote for the infotainment system. Thanks to this compartment, the width and utility of the main area gets limited. The glovebox has a cooling vent, and doesn’t get illumination. Strange!



The rectangular AC vents are symmetrical with a thick silver border, and sit below the infotainment system. Air flow direction controllers get chrome tips, but air volume cannot be adjusted or turned off! Climate control system gets chrome inserts on the buttons. While the AC performs well even on hot days, air volume control/shut-off is sorely needed. The blower has seven levels of adjustment though. Rear passengers can start their AC independently from the back, and that is indeed a relief.

The wide driver’s seat is 8-way electrically adjustable, which is a first-in-class feature. These seats give a lot of bolstering, while the headrests feel soft and comfortable. But Toyota has strangely given lumbar support the miss. While the wing mirrors are wide, the IRVM isn’t wide enough – not only is the rear windshield not covered properly, visibility is affected by the large headrests. In case you



have kept objects on the rear parcel shelf, rearward visibility will be near zero. While the A-pillar is relatively slimmer than others in the segment, and hence blind spots are lesser, the thick C-pillar is what you see in every modern-day car – hampers rearward visibility through the IRVM even more. The footwell is pretty wide and pedals are well spaced. But the shocking part is the dead pedal going missing in a car as premium as this – it is not available even in the automatic variant! Come on Toyota – with even lower end cars offering a dead pedal, it is now *de rigueur* to offer one. Sad!

At the rear, the doors don't open wide enough – maybe not as much as what the competition offers. With a sloping roof, taller passengers need to mind their heads while getting in. But the legroom is aplenty and you will not (hopefully) face any constraints of the feet getting stuck while trying to exit. Despite the premium positioning, both the front and rear door sills don't get scuff plates. The seat back is reclined at a slight angle, and seats are pretty comfortable with enough under-thigh support. In another segment first, the Yaris offers all variants with 60:40 split folding rear seats. All three occupants get headrests and three-point seatbelts – this is brilliant, as the fifth occupant getting a 3-point seatbelt is a very premium safety feature. But unfortunately, the middle portion of the seat is raised and three adults will find the space rather tight – width is lesser than competition. The rear seat is best suited for two adults and a child (Isofix points have been provided for child seats). Only the middle headrest is adjustable, but all three are removable. While headroom and legroom are comfortable, tall passengers are likely to complain as Ciaz/City offer far better legroom. Also, I pity the unfortunate adult soul who may have to sit in the middle to travel long distance in the Yaris.

While there is no real floor hump, the middle passenger (if adult) will have to also contend with the centre console/armrest protruding into their knees, making the ride that much more uncomfortable. Placed below the armrest are two 120W power outlets. But hey, given the premium positioning of the Yaris, how is it that rear AC vents have been given the miss? Fret not...because Toyota has provided a "Made for India" roof-mounted AC unit for three of the four variants on offer. You can adjust the blower speed it shows the speed on an LCD display. The blower has five levels of adjustment. The slim vents throw a great amount of air on passengers' faces. The arrangement seems more effective than the lower console-mounted vents usually seen. Obviously, the downside is a lot of air coming straight at you. But this is a pretty unique design.

In terms of storage areas, the Yaris gets a large bottle holder in each door, two cupholders ahead of the gear lever and two in the rear armrest. But at 476 litres, the boot is small when compared to the best-in-class competition, although it gets end-to-end carpeting, and a double covering for the spare wheel. The boot mouth is sufficiently large and the loading lip is not as high as some other cars. With rear seats getting a 60:40 split (no competitor offers this flexibility), one can fold them selectively to carry a combination of cargo and passengers. The spare wheel in all trim levels is a 15" steel unit, and it is of the same size as the regular wheels. Finally, the Yaris comes equipped with a total of seven airbags – one is exclusively for the driver's knee! Toyota deserves kudos.



Yaris – driven!

The Yaris is a petrol-only car – ‘there is no diesel variant coming anytime soon’: so says Toyota – and is available in manual and automatic variants. The 1.5-litre 4-cylinder engine comes mated to a 6-speed manual box or a 7-speed CVT. The latter is available right from the base variant and makes an auto box more desirable. Given how AMTs have picked up, it is very clear that there is a growing need for automatics in the country, not just in this segment. Toyota has gone for the CVT looking at the C2 segment, and unlike rivals’ that provide CVT only on top or medium spec variants, Toyota has dangled the CVT carrot in front of everyone. The manual variant is claimed to return a figure of 17.1 kmpl, while the CVT returns 17.8 kmpl – these are pretty good numbers, even if there would be a variance in the real world. The engine is pretty silent, and NVH level inside the cabin even at higher revs is very decent.

The 1,496cc petrol engine is the same that powers the Etios. But this engine is plonked inside the Yaris’ bay in a heavily re-worked guise. Power and torque have been bumped up, with the petrol mill churning out 107 bhp of peak power @ 6000rpm and 140 Nm of peak torque @ 4200rpm. While the engine does a fine job in the heavy traffic stream in a smooth and efficient way, the trouble comes when you suddenly want to accelerate while cruising. At that point in time, the engine will protest and power delivery won’t come through unless you downshift. This is not a motor that likes to be hurried and a weak mid-range leads to a flat power delivery. The better power delivery happens at higher revs. That means a downshift to spin the engine in the 3500-4000rpm band to get the Yaris to complete overtaking manoeuvres quickly. The Yaris redlines @ 6000rpm, where it feels most aggressive, before going off rather abruptly.

I drove the manual variant first, and found it a more involved car to drive as compared to the CVT. The latter gives one peace of mind in the urban jungle, but out in the open, the manual comes to life a lot more quickly as you move up the gears. You have power at your disposal and that makes the drive more enjoyable. In the CVT, the gearbox reacts a tad slower as compared to the inputs on the pedal. The engine takes time to respond; a sudden push of the pedal would mean that the engine grumbles a lot before it starts to play catch up. The gears change in the 3500-4000 rpm band only. The initial noise doesn’t translate into action, and this can get frustrating. Make no mistake, this CVT is silky smooth, but I have driven better CVTs. Things get better on the tiptronic mode or when you use the paddle shifters (only on the top spec variant). But you still miss that urgent burst of power that you sometimes seek.

Despite this delayed action-reaction with the CVT Yaris, I think there will be more takers for the CVT as it provides convenience and a smooth drive, and peace of mind in this mindless traffic. The reports from the initial bookings to the subsequent sales also talk of higher sales of the CVT variant. Add to it the bullet-proof reliability that is the hallmark of Toyota, and then it is no surprise why people would be opting for the CVT. The overall ride in both variants is pretty comfortable, although



the suspension set-up is on the stiffer side. Despite that, rear passengers won't complain when you hit bad roads, as you are wont to do in India. The Yaris is calm and collected on broken or potholed roads. When you throw it round corners, the Yaris takes them comfortably sans any hint of drama, but you do figure out that this is no corner carver. The Yaris is pretty sure-footed with the brakes, and its ground clearance even with a full load is better than what the City or the Verna offer.

Will it displace rivals?

The Yaris comes across as a well put-together package from Toyota. As mentioned a couple of times earlier, the bullet-proof Toyota reliability will give buyers a certain peace of mind with their purchase. But the styling (except for the front fascia) and the ride/handling parts don't give the buyer the emotional connect or the thrill that he/she may seek. This is a perfect "Point A to Point B" type of car – no nonsense, predictable, safe, comfortable, and comes with pretty good features. But the "X factor" is definitely missing, and it is also compounded by the higher pricing that Toyota has come out with. With the "X factor" missing, it doesn't become an exciting car to own. And the premium pricing means that this is not a value-for-money car either – CVT, airbags, features notwithstanding. The lure of the Toyota badge is unmistakable and the Yaris is a global brand to reckon with. But it falls short in a few areas and that will surely induce a sigh of relief to competition!

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