

# Tested: The all-new Toyota Starlet: value for money

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Whichever way you look at it, the revitalised Toyota Starlet will throw stars in your eyes. It's a real crowd pleaser and since the re-launch, the comfortable and smooth vehicle is fast becoming a hit with customers.



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First launched in September 2020, the Toyota Starlet was met with rapturous applause and instantly cemented itself within the highly-competitive B-segment in the passenger car market.

Its combination of stylish good looks, traditional hatchback layout, comprehensive specification level and impressive frugality at the pumps, earned the Starlet top marks amongst customers.

Have you ever heard these words: 'the gears are like butter'? Well, that applies so aptly with the edition I drove on test recently. The derivative was a five-speed manual and the gear changes, whether up or down, were butter-soft. The ride in this five-seater was smooth and economical, and in a combination of urban and freeway driving, I managed to get a modest 6.2l per 100km.

But perhaps most of all, the price will be appealing to a cross-section of buyers. (See below for pricing). And it's backed by a leading brand that boasts the biggest dealer network in the country.

## The car is the star

The new Starlet promises to deliver even more, on all fronts. Revised front and rear-styling up the visual ante with sleek headlamps up front, chrome detailing, a sloping rear roofline with boot spoiler (which flows seamlessly into the tailgate), and stylish two-piece rear light clusters which complete the sporty yet elegant profile.

A revised interior design features swooping accent lines and blue detailing, with a large centrally-mounted infotainment screen and easy-to-read instrument binnacle. A sporty, three-spoke steering wheel with large Toyota insignia and steering switches, provides the perfect driver interface.

The newcomer also gets a boost in performance with the adoption of a larger 1.5l engine (as employed in the Urban Cruiser), replacing the outgoing 1.4l mill. This enhances performance by 9kW (for a total power output of 77kW), while the torque receives an 8Nm amplification to take it to a max of 138Nm. Despite the increase in performance, the fuel index remains low, ranging between 5.4 and 5.7 l/100km.

## **Starry-eyed specifications**

In response to customer feedback and market trends, the new Starlet also boasts an upgraded specification roster. All models now come equipped with a touchscreen audio system (either 18 or 23cm) with USB, Bluetooth and Apple CarPlay/Android Auto interface, as well as a rear USB charger. Automatic Climate Control, power-retractable mirrors and electric windows are features on the standard menu.

Driver assistance is aided by rear parking sensors (PDC), Hill Assist Control (HAC), Vehicle Stability Control, ABS and EBD across the board. Driver and passenger airbags are also provided with the flagship Xr grade featuring Side & Curtain versions too.

The top-tier Xr model adds Smart Entry, Push Start and Cruise Control amongst other niceties.

## **Verdict**

The Starlet builds on the core strengths of earlier launch models. Good performance, fuel efficiency and affordable pricing the mainstay that brings out the Starlet with a modern exterior design, spacious interior and enhanced specification levels that will go down well with aspirant buyers. What more can one ask for considering the appealing price that the Starlet re-enters the market at? The Starlet could pass as a mid-sized vehicle and is value for money all round.

## **Starry line-up and pricing**

The familiar three-grade strategy has been retained (Xi, Xs and Xr). Buyers have a choice between a five-speed manual or four-speed automatic transmission on Xs and Xr models, resulting in a model matrix of five variants catering to a variety of needs.

- Starlet 1.5 Xi MT - R 226,200
- Starlet 1.5 Xs MT - R 239,100
- Starlet 1.5 Xs AT - R 261,100
- Starlet 1.5 Xr MT - R 294,900
- Starlet 1.5 Xr AT - R 313,300



## Peace of mind is all part of the seal

All Starlet models are sold with a three-services/45,000km service plan – with 15,000 km service intervals. A three-year/100,000km warranty is also provided. Customers can additionally purchase service plan and warranty extensions from their local Toyota dealer – and they benefit from the biggest dealer network in the country (over 220 outlets).



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