

# Introducing the Toyota Starlet, a new compact budget car



By [Naresh Maharaj](#)

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The new Toyota Starlet replaces the Toyota Etios. If you cast your mind back to the Etios, it was a lot smaller than its successor and resembled the Suzuki Baleno. Now, enter the Starlet which boasts more space and legroom and comes in at a starting price of just R204,900. I spent a week testing the Starlet on both urban and freeway driving and I was reasonably impressed.



Photo credit: Naresh Maharaj



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Joint ventures, mergers and acquisitions have been around for a long while both locally and internationally, so when it came to the cross-brand partnership with the two Japanese companies, I was keen to see the end result.

A spacious Starlet has been born. Why go alone when you can take a partner along for the ride? You could call it a win-win situation for both companies as Toyota's expertise in hybrid technology benefits Suzuki whilst Suzuki are known for compact cars, which will benefit Toyota. In nature, it's called a symbiotic relationship.

## The old RunX perhaps?

The semi-rounded boot lid got me thinking about the Toyota RunX that sold very well in South Africa. The back of the car has a classic hatchback look whilst the front is accentuated by a fast downward sloping bonnet. Just underneath that bonnet are two horizontal chrome bars that form into a v-shape grille and boasts the Toyota trademark emblem.



Photo credit: Naresh Maharaj

The rear-design centres around the large LED tail lamps with red and translucent accents. Colour coded exterior mirrors and the boot lid chrome bar also adds to the good overall looks of the Starlet. It makes a huge difference aesthetically. The Xr variant that I drove featured stylish turbine-shaped 16-inch alloy wheels.

## Interior design

For a compact "small" car, I was really impressed with the space that is afforded to the driver and passengers. The ventilation, infotainment and climate-control switchgear is aptly placed in the centre console and is within easy reach of the driver.

One of the most notable features is the bright, colourful and easy-to-read instrument cluster with on-centre Multi-Information Display (MID) and dual analogue gauges. The cloth seats are comfortable and it serves its purpose well.

Under the hood

The Starlet is powered by a 1.4l Dohc four-cylinder engine. Start it up and the engine is ready to make your commute enjoyable. The power output is pegged at 68kW, which is 2kW more than the Etios it replaces. Two transmission choices are on offer: a five-speed manual and four-speed automatic, all driving the front wheels.

## **Infotainment is also part of the deal**

Xi and Xs models feature an audio system with CD/Bluetooth/USB/aux functionality, playing through six-speakers. Xr models offer a feature-rich touchscreen audio system complete with Android Auto and Apple CarPlay integration for navigation, telephone and music-streaming services. Traditional USB, Bluetooth and MP3/Aux compatibility remains – offering the user a wide variety of in-vehicle entertainment systems

## **Go safe**

Much has been made recently about the safety features in budget cars. On this note, all Starlet models come generously equipped with safety and security equipment which include active electronic aids such as ABS, EBD, Brake Assist (BA) and Vehicle Stability Control (VSC).

Automatic transmission models also include Hill Assist Control (HAC). Xi and Xs models are fitted with driver and passenger airbags, while the Xr variants also feature curtain and side airbags.

## **Verdict**

The small budget car market is fiercely contested in South Africa and accounts for a very good percentage of sales. So I expect the Starlet to be up there with the best when the sales figures are released monthly. I say this because the Etios enjoyed around 22% share of that market on average.

Naturally, fuel consumption is a key component when buying a low budget car. I managed to obtain an overall 5.1ls per 100kms, and this includes both urban and open road travels. The fuel tank takes in 37ls of petrol and with easy driving, one should ideally get around 700kms from a full tank. The boot space is more than ample.

The Starlet builds on the core strengths of Etios: good performance, fuel efficiency and affordable pricing. The Starlet has 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 low price that the Starlet enters the market at.

## **Model line-up and pricing**

- Starlet 1.4 Xi MT – R204,900
- Starlet 1.4 Xs MT: R215,200
- Starlet 1.4 Xs AT: R235,700
- Starlet 1.4 Xr MT: R258,500
- Starlet 1.4 Xr AT: R272,500

## **Warranty and maintenance**

All Starlet models are sold with a three-services/45,000 km service plan – with 15,000 km service intervals. A three-year/100,000km warranty is also provided. Customers can purchase an additional service plan and warranty extensions from their local Toyota dealer.

## ABOUT NARESH MAHARAJ

Naresh Maharaj is a petrol head who loves cars and writing about them. He is also a Member of the SA Guild of Motoring Journalists. Naresh is also an international sports correspondent and an acclaimed corporate MC and voice-over artist. Naresh is a sports/news producer for community radio stations and also an award-winning sports journalist. Contact Naresh on [nmaharaj321@gmail.com](mailto:nmaharaj321@gmail.com)

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