

New Toyota Starlet review: A budget-friendly hatchback with great fuel-consumption

 By [Imran Salie](#)

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An updated version of the Toyota Starlet launched in South Africa in early June, nearly two years after the hatchback made its debut in the country. Since its local launch in 2020, the Starlet has become a sought-after vehicle and is doing well in terms of sales. I recently test drove the updated version for a week to see what the hype is all about.



Source: [Motorpress](#)

How does the updated Toyota Starlet perform?

The Starlet I drove was the five-speed XR manual derivative with a 1.5l engine and an output of 77kW and 138Nm of torque, which is 9kW and 8Nm more than the 2020 model.

The 1.5l engine surprised me, it made the Starlet do simple overtakes on highways with not much fuss. It's fair to say that the power and torque are more than enough for a comfortable drive. It doesn't have the power of a hot hatch, but I give assurance that there's enough to keep up and not be left behind.

The Starlet also handles roads with bumps and minor potholes quite well, making for a comfortable drive in suburban and city areas. Overall, the suspension is up to standard. The steering is adequate, it's not too stiff or too loose.

There's little to no cabin noise, which is one of the things I liked the most about the Starlet. It certainly plays a part in the overall drive quality for the motorist.

I experienced a fuel consumption of 5.8l/100km, which is amazing. This might differ for everyone though, as driving behaviour plays a big part in fuel consumption. I'm sure if I drove the Starlet harder and more aggressively my fuel consumption would have been higher. Nevertheless, 5.8l/100km is impressive. I achieved this low fuel consumption by staying in lower revs, keeping in higher gears, avoiding traffic, and not speeding.

The interior

The top of the range XR model is equipped with a leather steering wheel, six tweeter speakers, automatic climate control, power-retractable mirrors, electric windows, a 23cm infotainment system, smart entry, push start, a reverse camera and cruise control.



Source: [MOTORPRESS](#)



Source: [Motorpress](https://www.motorpress.com)

I found the infotainment system easy to use and the reserve camera was a welcomed feature, despite not having the best quality. I did yearn for a full 360-degree parking camera system during my time with the Starlet and I think it would make a great addition to the hatchback.



Source: [Motorpress](#)



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The climate control felt more like an AC, which is not an issue. So it should be noted that the system blows out air rapidly

rather than gradually to set a temperature. The speakers did a good job but I wished for more sound in the rear passenger seats.

Overall the cabin experience was a cosy one and the extras that come with the XR model add to the quality of the Starlet and make it a highly-recommendable B-segment hatchback.

The exterior

All Starlet models have a boot space of 315l. The XR derivative has chrome accents, 16-inch alloys, chrome, LED headlamps, and wide-mounted fog lamps. All models have been revised with a sleeker look and the rear is where the look has changed most noticeably.



Source: [Motorpress](https://www.motorpress.com)



Source: [Motorpress](https://www.motorpress.com)

I find the new Starlet design better than the 2020 model, which I think is unappealing to the eye. The revised rear headlights are much better looking and the front styling has been given a sportier look.



Source: [Motorpress](#)



Source: [Motorpress](#)

All in all, I think the facelift is superb. It's as if Toyota caught on that the Starlet needs to look better to appeal to more

people even though it was already doing really well in the market.

Verdict

I genuinely enjoyed my time with the Starlet and I'm sure the experience would be the same for others. The XR matches the Polo Vivo in terms of price and if I had the choice between the two I would go with the Starlet. It drives comfortably on the road, the cabin is cosy, its fuel consumption is great, and all the features that come with the top-of-the-range model really make it a car worth buying.

Starlet lineup 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 5 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

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

ABOUT IMRAN SALIE

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