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REVIEW

Small is IN

2008-09 Toyota Vitz tested

The death of the Toyota Starlet left many people to burn incense candles for days to relieve the sadness. First time car owners, small families and people with ridiculously tiny parking spaces looked elsewhere to fill their small-car need. The Starlet was originally designed with soft roly-poly suspension and a steering that provided no input. In a market where ordinary and simple ruled, the Starlet sold big. There was the 130bhp GT for the enthusiasts, but that came in limited numbers.

Post 2000 Toyota only had the Vitz/Platz (a.k.a. Yaris) on offer. The latter should have been called a platypus instead of a Platz because of its severely stunted, odd looks. The hatchback was better looking, cute, almost. But they were all slow and rather uninteresting unless you chanced upon the Vitz RS. That was a pocket rocket in line with the older Starlet GT. I digress, but there's a point. The second generation of Vitz came in

with better looks and more interesting city options.

The one I test drove was the 2008-9 model. It's similar to the one in the pictures except it had so many scratches, dents and ugly steel protective bumpers, we thought we'd take the refuge of the net and find a red picture. Cause these cars look great in bright spanking colors. Designed in Europe, it reflects contemporary class leading design cues. Simple, but pleasing to the eyes.

I've been dying to have a go in it for one particular reason. This is the 1.0 litre car with the CVT transmission and it hasn't been bogged down with a CNG tank. It's spacious. Tall people will fit easily without suffering from neck cramps. Wide people, too. The controls are simple, intuitive. And there's a push start button to make you think this is a sporty thing. It's not. But should you care?

The 996cc isn't quite enough but in the city you don't really notice. The

engine, developed by Daihatsu, produces a little under 70bhp. The CVT ensures acceleration is brisk and smooth, enough to tackle those annoying electric rickshaws and the errant Premio driver. It manages to cope with the added weight of modern safety requirements - stiffer, thicker body shell, airbags and heavy electric motors everywhere. The ride is supple and the cabin is muted. There you have it. That's all you need in the city.

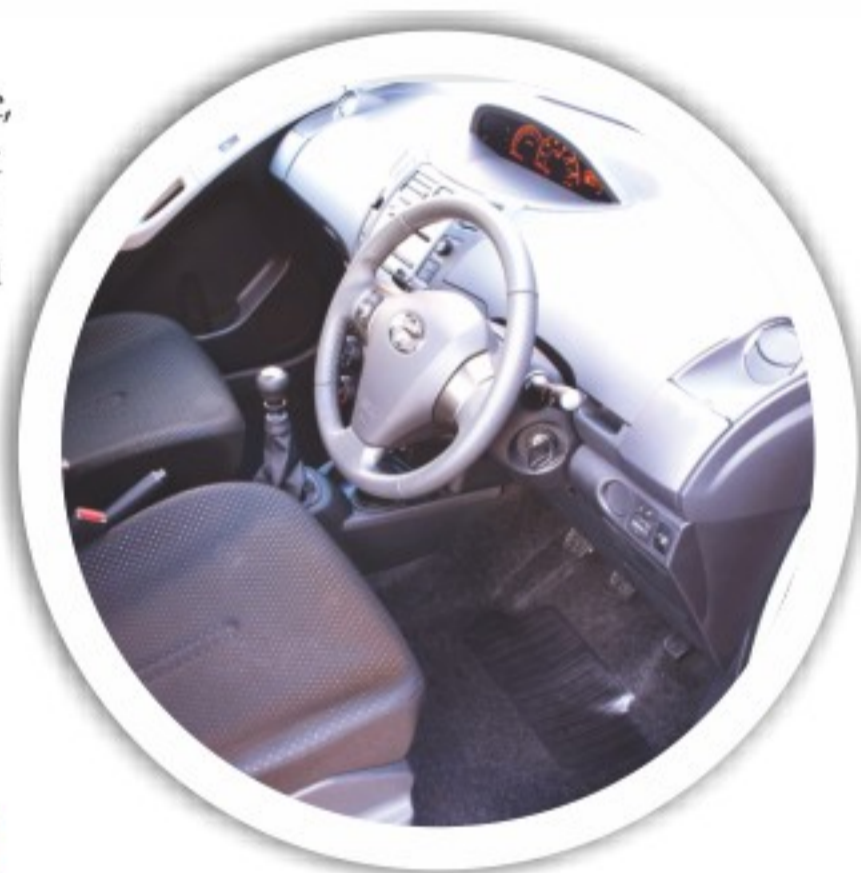
So, should you really care?

In most parts of the world, small cars are the big sellers in the cities. Easy to park, decent looking, and a lot of interior space, thanks to tighter engine dimensions. Except in America where people love oversized everything. We're not Americans. We don't have their football field wide streets. We need the little cars.

The Vitz 1.0 is brilliant in the sense



Loads of options if you want to spice up the Vitz. Bright, loud colours work the best.



with its simple demeanor. It's comfortable, fits four-and-half people, very easy to maneuver and you forget it's even there. It's not special, but it's perfect for all your daily needs. If you want special, try and get the 1.8 RS with 130bhp. Now that would be special.

Alternatives:  
Mitsubishi Mirage/Colt 1.0  
Maruti Suzuki Ritz/Splash  
Hyundai i10

EHSANUR RAZA RONNY



SPECS

2008-09 Toyota Vitz

**Engine:** 1.0 litre VVT-i 1KR-FE inline-3; 1.3 VVT-i litre 2NZ-FE inline-4.  
**Transmission:** CVT gearbox  
**Curb weight:** 1,040 kg

**Prices:**  
1.0 litre version - 12 lakh and up  
1.3 - 13.5 lakh and up  
Secondhand models go for sale at 8-9 lakhs.



Plenty of space, for a small hatch.






RUFHOUSING

RUF Automobiles: German Porsche tuning at its best

Almost everyone in the automotive circles from any random corner of the planet has dreams of someday owning a world class tuning company, wrenching on cars for a living and gaining both fame and fortune once they're in the limelight.

With its roots in 1939 in Germany, RUF started out as a small servicing shop. Over the years it expanded its business into auto repairs and a full service and refueling station, and Alois Ruf Sr. did not have to worry about a Ruf over his head (heh), even expanding into independent manufacturing by making buses for public transport.

Growing up surrounded by German machinery, Alois Ruf Jr., the son of the founder, developed a huge fascination for Porsches, the ultimate German sports cars. When his father died in 1974 and it was time for Jr. to fill his father's shoes and take charge of the business, the son decided to take Ruf in a new direction: tuning.

1975 saw the first Ruf fettled Porsche hit the streets: a 930 series 911 with a tuned 3.3 litre engine. With several orders placed, Ruf was on it's way to the big leagues. It would go on to release more tuned and performance enhanced

Porsche vehicles, and in the 1980s, Ruf would receive the seal of approval from the German government, which made Ruf an official independent car manufacturer.

This is what sets it apart from the rest of the large tuning houses: Ruf is considered to be an actual car manufacturer. All their cars come with unique Vehicle Identification Numbers (VINs) which are different from the Porsche VINs, because all the cars Ruf receive into their factory comes without a chassis or engine number.

The illustrious history of Ruf is littered with greats, like the CTR "Yellowbird", CTR2, CTR3, R-Turbo, RT12 and the RGT-8. The first CTR Yellowbird set the record for the fastest production car in the world when it came out, topping out at 211 mph, beating out the likes of supercars such as the Ferrari F40 and the Porsche 959. With innovative performance parts development and properly committed design, every aspect of a Ruf car is addressed when in the shop.

Just ignore their versions of the Cayenne.

THE GREEN STIG



The CTR "Yellowbird" : fastest car on the planet at the time of its introduction. This is what legends are made of.

NEWS

2015 Subaru Impreza WRX

Subaru readies its fighter to take on the Evolution

Subaru has launched the latest version of the Impreza WRX, and initial response from the automotive community puts the all-wheel drive, boxer engine sedan in relatively lukewarm territory.

Memes are already circulating on the internet about its looks, many comparing it to the Lancer Evolution X, the Impreza's arch nemesis. The Impreza's popularity



has dipped in recent years, but the performance still has the ability to silence critics.

The numbers: 305 horsepower at 6,000 rpm and 290 lb.-ft. peak torque at 4,000 rpm. The engine and drivetrain are the same as the last gen, but the redesigned, slightly more upmarket Japanese rocket gets tech improvements all across the board. It'll also have a CVT gearbox, which has alarmed the automotive enthusiasts around the world. Honestly, though, this piece of news isn't all that shocking to us, and there's probably no cause for alarm. Subaru knows how to engineer a properly fast car, with or without a conventional manual gearbox, so hopefully they'll iron out any kinks the gearbox might have.

2014 Dakar Rally:  
Amputee team completes the challenge

Daniel "Baz" Whittingham became only the second amputee in history to complete the Dakar Rally, on January 20, 2014, on the Chilean stage of what has been described as the toughest rally competition on earth. He was also the first amputee ever to finish the race in the truck category.

His teammate was Philip "Barney" Gillespie, who was the first amputee to complete the Dakar when he finished in a Wildcat rally car, last year.

The team finished at the back of the pack, but it was a monumental event for the Race2Recovery team, members of which have overcome huge obstacles to keep their spirits high. Baz, who was injured in an IED blast in Afghanistan, said



the Dakar was the toughest driving challenge he had ever faced, and he is proud to have completed the race despite several mishaps on the way.

Just goes to show you can recover from pretty much anything, if you put your mind and nerves to the test.



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