



Independent Editorial Report

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FAMILY VIEW

Toyota Verso

CHAPTER AND VERSO

Toyota's Latest Verso Offers A Better Looking Take On The Mini MPV Theme. June Neary Likes It. A Lot...

A Family View - Will It Suit?

Despite a penchant for strappy shoes and dresses that require dieting and talcum powder to get into and sticky tape to remain decent in, I do have a very practical side. As much as I like a roadster or a sports coupe, I always find myself hesitating when faced with the prospect of actually handing over the readies for one. In short, I need a car that can do it all. It needs to be entertaining to drive, well built, reliable, capable of seating a whole bunch of friends and, as the inner aesthete emerges again, it can't look as if it's fallen from the ugly tree and clouted every branch on the way down. As much as I respected Toyota's old Corolla Verso, it was always that tad too frumpy for my tastes. The latest one is a different matter. Toyota have not only made it a good deal more practical but it's now one of the best looking of its ilk. No longer will you look as if you're road testing a development mule for the next Popemobile. This was something I could grow to like.

The Practicalities

This class of car splits according to whether it can seat five or seven people. Fortunately the Verso falls into the latter category, neatly sidestepping the inevitable "so what's the point?" questions directed at five-seat mini MPVs. Uniquely in its class, all five rear seats fold down into the floor to create a totally flat loading surface. This means that you won't need to haul heavy seats into and out of the car if ultimate carrying capacity is required. A lot of thought has gone into this system, the seats not only being the lightest in class but also requiring a simple one-touch operation to fold each one flat.

Not only does the Verso help furnish Toyota with the most comprehensive MPV range in the European market, but it is also expected to account for around a quarter of all Verso sales which, when you consider that enough Verso have been sold to landfill the Pacific Ocean, it's easy to appreciate the Verso's significance. Okay, so the concept of turning the world's biggest body of water into a single-make version of your local scrapyards may have been a mild exaggeration, but don't underestimate the number of Versos that will soon be trundling off the end of the Turkish production line.

Behind the Wheel

The interior looks a good deal sharper than the old car, with tighter manufacturing tolerances meaning panel fits are better. As with all manufacturers, Toyota have worked hard at getting the 'door slam' sound exactly right and the combination of carefully sited hinges and clever air sealing makes the Verso sound more impregnable than Fort Knox when you slam the doors shut. The materials used throughout the cabin have been thoroughly upgraded too with a combination of metallic finishes to accentuate the centre console. The design majors on geometric shapes and three-dimensional elements to render an arch like effect. It's quite unlike any other Toyota interior and marks a new design direction that's surprisingly bold for a model that will be marketed to some of the most conservative new car customers. It's spot on for somebody like me though. There are four engines to choose from, a 109bhp 1.6-litre entry-level car, a 1.8-litre that packs 127bhp and the 2.2-litre D-4D. The 2.2-litre D-4D found in the range topping models comes with 134bhp as standard or 175bhp in the sporty T180 model. I'd opted for the 2.0-litre D-4D and it's a smooth yet lively engine that also turns in excellent fuel economy and emissions figures.

Value for money

Prices for the latest Verso have crept up in line with its added capability. The car I drove was a 2.2-litre D-4D in T3 specification and this retails at £18,195. Demand is strong so don't expect much in the way of dealer discounts either. Having said that, insurance is very affordable at Group 6E and should you hanker after a less expensive model the range opens at £14,095.





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Could I Live With One?

I challenge anyone to find a Toyota Verso difficult to live with. It just makes everything so easy and before too long you start wondering how you got by without one. In a case of life imitating art, my friends began arguing over who would be the nominated driver on a girl's night out. This car has come a long way...