

TOYOTA AVENSIS VERSO

Ultima 2.0 Litre Automatic Wagon



FEATURES	
BEST	WORST
Interior space and versatility High quality finish Pleasant and easy to drive	Performance is a little flat under load Temporary use spare Unavailability of cruise control

Toyota has replaced its commercial-based Spacia MPV with a brand new purpose-designed seven seater wagon called the Avensis Verso.

The Avensis not only gives Toyota a much more modern and more efficient entry into the people mover (or family wagon) class, it also provides a cheaper alternative to the larger eight seater Tarago.

Prices for the three model, two equipment grades Avensis line-up start at \$39,900 for the GLX manual, with the automatic GLX costing \$41,900. The auto-only Ultima model (tested) is priced at \$46,990.

By way of comparison, Tarago prices start at \$51,300 and rise to a high of \$69,050.

Power for the Avensis comes from an all-alloy 2.0 litre DOHC four cylinder engine that features infinitely variable inlet valve timing and full sequential fuel injection.

The engine drives through a four speed electronically controlled automatic transmission, with the option of a five speed manual in the GLX version.

Standard equipment levels are comprehensive, with the GLX featuring dual front airbags, front seatbelt pre-tensioners with force limiters, four wheel disc brakes with ABS and electronic brake force distribution, dual air conditioning, keyless entry, a CD player, power exterior mirrors and one-touch power window operation.

The Ultima adds front seat mounted side airbags, side curtain airbags, 16 inch alloy wheels (4), roof rails, a rear spoiler, a cassette player in the sound system, front fog lamps, leather-bound steering wheel and woodgrain interior trimming.

Surprisingly, cruise control is neither standard, nor listed as an option for either model. However satellite navigation is available.

One of the main design aims for the Avensis was to provide maximum packaging efficiency and interior space, with the sort of versatility that families require when they're carrying varying loads of people and cargo. There are 18 different seating and load carrying configurations.

Though it's actually shorter in overall length than a Toyota Camry, the Avensis has a longer wheelbase and a larger 'footprint' on the road than many of its competitors. The result is a surprisingly roomy interior, although some compromises need to be made in order to accommodate seven in reasonable comfort.

Up front, the driver and passenger have plenty of leg and headroom and sit in seats that are softly padded with comfort in mind. However, I found the cushion length too short to provide me with good thigh support.

The three-position second row seat is on runners, so legroom can be adjusted to suit. If this seat is slid right back, there's precious little knee space in the third seat, but it is possible to find an equitable compromise. The centre seating position has only a lap seat belt and no head restraint.

Though the rear seat is best suited to two children, it's better than the fold up extra seats in many 4WDs. Third row occupants don't get opening windows, but they do have overhead ventilation vents.

Load space is fairly short with all seats in use, but with the ability to fold both the third seat (50/50) and the second seat (60/40), there's plenty of scope to vary the load capacity. With both seats folded flat, the load area is quite vast.

Standards of finish in the Avensis look to be excellent, however the plush, lightly coloured interior of the test Ultima could be a worry if, for example, you were ferrying a load of children home from a muddy football match.

Aside from the dash-mounted gear lever, whose position and operation take a while to get used to (and which some drivers reported hitting with their knee), the control layout is straightforward and easy to use.

With just a 2.0 litre engine under the bonnet (some of its competitors have 2.2 or 2.4 litre engines) the expectations for performance weren't high, however around town at least, the Avensis did quite well.

At no time in city or suburban traffic did the test Avensis feel lethargic, with good throttle response and a ready automatic kickdown action (almost too willing to drop down a gear sometimes).

Highway running with anything more than a medium load does highlight a slight power deficiency, and on hills the automatic changes up and down frequently as it tries to find a suitable gear. The engine sounds busy when taken into its higher rev ranges.

The Avensis handles well for this type of vehicle and the brakes are powerful and effective.

SUMMARY:

If your family transport needs have outgrown the average five seater sedan or wagon, then the Toyota Avensis could make a lot of sense.

The Avensis is a much more practical, efficient and economical way to carry extra people and cargo than a large heavy duty 4WD (unless of course, you actually do use that 4WD off-road).

As a purpose-built family wagon, the Avensis is also far more versatile, and a more attractive, smoother, quieter, safer and better vehicle to drive than the old converted van type of people mover.

TOYOTA AVENSIS VERSO

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE:

Type Four cylinder, in-line, DOHC, 16 valves
Capacity in litres..... 1.998
Induction Multi-point electronic fuel injection
Fuel recommendation ULP
Claimed max. power 110 kW at 6000 rpm
Claimed max. torque 192 Nm at 4000 rpm
Specific power output..... 55.1 kW/litre

TRANSMISSION:

Type Four speed automatic
Driving wheels Front
Speed per 1000 rpm in top gear 37.5 km/h

WHEELS: Alloy, 6.5JJ x 16 inch

TYRES: Dunlop SP Sport 205/60 R16

Spare: Speed limited space saver

STEERING:

Type Power assisted rack and pinion
Turns lock to lock..... 3.3
Turning circle (measured) 11.5 metres

DIMENSIONS:

Mass 1490 kg
Length 4650 mm
Width (incl. mirrors 2008 mm) 1760 mm
Height 1725 mm
Ground clearance (measured) 138 mm
Seating capacity 7
Fuel tank capacity 60 litres

TOWING:

Max. towed mass (trailer plus load) 1500 kg
Max. towball download (laden trailer) 150 kg

NRMA THEFT RATING:

Points on 0-110 scale (high score best) 59.5

WARRANTY: Three years, 100,000 km

MANUFACTURED IN: Japan

TEST RESULTS

ACCELERATION:

50 - 80 km/h (in Drive) 5.0 sec
60 - 100 km/h (in Drive) 7.0 sec
0 - 80 km/h 8.4 sec
0 - 100 km/h 12.2 sec
0 - 400 metres 18.5 sec

FUEL CONSUMPTION:

Litres/100 km in city 12.0
Litres/100 km on highway 7.8
Litres/100 km overall 9.2

BRAKING:

Distance to stop from 80 km/h 29.3 metres

NOISE:

Interior at constant 80 km/h 67 dB(A)

- Test vehicle supplied by Toyota Motor Corporation Australia Limited

Call Automotive Technical Services on 1300 655 443, should you require additional information on this vehicle, on other makes, or for general advice on automotive matters.