

TOYOTA COROLLA ULTIMA 1.8 Litre Automatic Hatch

FEATURES	
BEST	WORST
Good performance and handling	Ultima's ride sharpness
Improved interior space	Reduced load space in hatch
Competitive equipment levels	Noise levels a little high

The Toyota Corolla is the world's biggest selling car with nearly 26 million built since 1966 (29 million if you count derivatives). The Corolla is sold in 58 countries and made in 15. What makes one model so popular?

Right from the start, the Corolla appealed as a straightforward, easy to drive, economical and reasonably priced small car. It didn't take long for the Corolla to also establish an excellent reliability record and above average resale values.

Since those early days, the Corolla has evolved and developed into a far more sophisticated product, however those core values remain and along with strong brand loyalty, account for much of the model's incredible success.

With these latest 2002 models, the Corolla moves into its ninth generation and buyers have an even greater range of models from which to choose. This time around there are 18 models, with the choice of hatchback, sedan and wagon body styles (it's the first time a Corolla wagon has been available since 1994).

All models share the same 100 kW variable valve timing 1.8 litre engine and offer the choice of manual or automatic transmission. There are four equipment grades – Ascent, Conquest, Levin and Ultima. You can't get a Levin in the sedan line-up and there's no Ultima in the wagon range. Ultimas are available only in automatic form.

Prices start at \$19,990 for a manual Ascent (hatches and sedans are priced the same) and climb to a hefty \$30,990 for the Ultima. Air conditioning is \$1,640 in the Ascent and standard on all other models. Automatic transmission adds another \$1,800.

Obviously, equipment levels increase as you go up the range, but all new Corolla models come standard with a driver's airbag, four-wheel disc brakes, power exterior mirrors, central locking, power steering with tilt-adjustable wheel, driver's seat height adjust, engine immobiliser and a 60/40 split-fold rear seat.

In the new Corolla, Toyota has adopted the latest fashion for tall bodies and higher, more upright seating to maximise occupant space. The hatchback Ultima tested provided satisfactory legroom front and rear, and ample headroom. Rear occupants can readily place their feet beneath the front seats, adding to their comfort and space.

But while interior space in the new Corolla hatchback rates well, its short chopped-off rear styling has resulted in a decrease in load length compared to the previous hatchback model. Buyers who need a larger load capacity may need to look at the sedan or wagon models.

Toyota claims the new Corolla wagon has more load capacity than the soon-to-be-discontinued Camry wagon.

As you would expect in a Corolla, the controls are well positioned, clearly marked and light to operate. The driving position is good and the car is generally easy to drive and to park.

The three rear head restraints can cause a slight blind spot when reversing, but of course their safety value can't be disputed. The hatchback is the only one of the three models to miss out on a lap/sash centre rear seatbelt.

Though the new Corolla's performance is not quite as exhilarating as Toyota's publicity would perhaps have us believe, we did record measurable improvements in acceleration times over a previously tested auto hatch.

Both around town and out on the highway, the automatic hatch tested performed satisfactorily, with good response when called upon to give a bit extra.

Given the work done to reduce NVH levels, the test Ultima wasn't as quiet as I might have expected it to be, particularly seeing that it is the luxury model of the range. There was no single dominant noise, rather a background of road and general mechanical operating noises.

On a similar vein, the Ultima's hard ride over sharp bumps was more in keeping with a sports model, rather than the flagship of the range.

The suspension has obviously been tuned more with handling in mind, because in this regard, the Ultima hatch showed up quite well, handling varying road conditions with accuracy and aplomb.

With the benefits of ABS, electronic brake force distribution and brake assist, the test Ultima gave an impressive braking performance. Emergency stops were powerful and achieved in short distances, while resistance to fade under heavy usage was very good. This system is standard on the Levin and Ultima, and a \$1,400 option pack on the Ascent and Conquest that is worth considering.

SUMMARY:

With an expanded range of models, new features and equipment, improved performance, and increased passenger space, the new Corolla seems to have the right ingredients to continue its phenomenal success story.

At around \$33,000 on the road, Ultima prices may shock traditional Corolla buyers, but there are plenty of other choices for those who can get by with a little less luxury. Toyota acknowledges that the bulk of new Corolla sales will be Ascent and Conquest models.



TOYOTA COROLLA ULTIMA

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE:

Type Four cylinder, DOHC, 16 valves
Capacity in litres..... 1.794
Induction Electronic fuel injection
Fuel recommendation ULP
Claimed max. power 100 kW at 6000 rpm
Claimed max. torque 171 Nm at 4200 rpm
Specific power output..... 55.7 kW/litre

TRANSMISSION:

Type Four speed automatic
Driving wheels Front
Speed per 1000 rpm in top gear..... 42.0 km/h

WHEELS: Alloy, 6 x 15 inch

TYRES: Michelin, 195/60 R15

Spare: Matching size and type

STEERING:

Type Power assisted rack and pinion
Turns lock to lock..... 3.3
Turning circle (measured) 10.7 metres

DIMENSIONS:

Mass 1185 kg
Length 4175 mm
Width (incl. mirrors 1935 mm) 1695 mm
Height 1470 mm
Ground clearance (measured)..... 167 mm
Seating capacity 5
Fuel tank capacity..... 55 litres

TOWING:

Max. towed mass (trailer plus load)..... 1300 kg
Max. towball download (laden trailer)..... 130 kg

NRMA THEFT RATING:

Points on 0-110 scale (high score best) 57

WARRANTY: Three years, 100,000 km

MANUFACTURED IN: Japan

TEST RESULTS

ACCELERATION:

50 - 80 km/h (in Drive)..... 5.1 sec
60 - 100 km/h (in Drive)..... 6.8 sec
0 - 80 km/h 7.8 sec
0 - 100 km/h 11.4 sec
0 - 400 metres 18.0 sec

FUEL CONSUMPTION:

Litres/100 km in city 9.7
Litres/100 km on highway..... 8.1
Litres/100 km overall 8.6

BRAKING:

Distance to stop from 80 km/h 26.8 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.