

Yaris cabin offers excellent fit and finish

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Mazda.

As part of a partnership between the two Japanese automakers, Mazda is building the Yaris Sedan for Toyota at its plant in Salamanca, Mexico, which also produces the Mazda2.

It is no coincidence that the 2016 Yaris Sedan looks an awful lot like the Mazda2 because that's what it is, with the addition of some Toyota badging and a few other modifications.

Mazda decided against bringing the 2016 Mazda2 into North America so Toyota is marketing the car in the U.S. as a Scion iA and here as the Yaris.

Anyone familiar with Mazda will see the similarities; particularly inside which has a decidedly upscale look for a car in this segment with lots of soft-touch materials and nice use of accent pieces.

Outside, the Yaris Sedan has aggressive styling with a prominent hexagonal grille that undoubtedly will have its share of detractors.

Otherwise, it is a very eye-catching design with a long hood, swept back A-pillars and a short rear deck.

Unlike most subcompacts,

Toyota has loaded the entry-level Yaris up with premium features like push button start, power door locks and keyless entry, power windows, cruise control, tilt and telescoping steering column, air conditioning, dual power adjustable exterior mirrors, steering-wheel mounted audio controls and more.

It starts at \$16,995 with six-speed manual transmission and \$18,220 for a six-speed automatic.

Our tester was the Premium model, starting at \$20,200 and available only with an automatic. At this level you add 16-inch aluminum alloy wheels, back-up camera, fog lamps, heated front seats and a display audio system with a seven-inch touchscreen, six speakers and two USB ports.

With all taxes and the \$1,535 destination charge, it priced out at \$21,866.

Price may be an issue with consumers as the base Yaris Sedan starts at \$1,000 more than the larger Corolla but it does have much more standard content such as air conditioning and push button start.

Toyota marketers see it appealing to a different buyer than the hatchback, which they aim at the small car en-



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thusiast.

They look at the sedan as predominately an urban vehicle that would resonate with younger, style-conscious buyers who are technology oriented.

Inside, the cabin of the Yaris Sedan is nicely put together. In fact, the dash is the same as in the CX-3, chosen Canada's Utility Vehicle of the Year by the Automobile Journalists Association of Canada.

The controls are well placed and the fit and finish is excellent.

The seats are comfortable, but if I had one complaint it would be that the short bottom seat cushion doesn't provide enough support for the taller driver. This would be particularly noticeable on longer trips but not so much for jaunts around the city that will likely make up the bulk of the driving with this car.

In back, legroom is not very generous, but on par with other subcompacts on the market. The trunk is fairly spacious with 382 litres of cargo room that can be expanded

when the 60/40 split rear seats are folded.

Power comes from a 1.5-litre DOHC 16-valve four-cylinder engine, producing 106 hp and 103 lb/ft of torque.

Not oodles of power, but enough for every driving situation we encountered. We only drove the automatic during our weeklong test but had an opportunity to drive the manual at launch last year.

Both transmissions perform well; my preference would be the six-speed manual, which is only available at the base level.

The car corners well and handles all but the harshest roads with ease. Engine noise is pronounced on hard acceleration although it settles in at speed.

All in all, a fun, spirited little sedan that has a touch of 'zoom, zoom' thanks to its Mazda DNA.

BODY STYLE: Four-door sub-compact sedan

DRIVE METHOD: Front engine, front-wheel drive

ENGINE: 1.5-litre DOHC 16-valve four-cylinder engine (106 hp, 103 lb/ft of torque) with a six-speed manual or six-speed automatic transmission

CARGO CAPACITY: 382 litres

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