

We drive – Toyota Verso 1.8 SX CVT -by Adri Bezuidenhout (22/02/2012)

The latest Toyota Verso could not have arrived at a more opportune time. It was delivered to my doorstep a day before departing on a bass-fishing trip to the Middelburg/Belfast area.

With one rear seat tilted forward the Verso swallowed three adults' tackle, bedding, clothes, food, drinks, cameras for three days with utmost ease. Open road travelling is a breeze. During our stay seven people also boarded the Verso for a buying spree to Belfast. No problem, except that limited ground clearance reared its ugly head on dirt roads.

I was dying to get my hands on the Verso's much bragged-about continuously variable transmission or CVT for short. I hate to quote from motor manufacturers' press releases, but in this instance not even I could have said it better for you – and me – to understand.

"The new transmission utilises Toyota's Multidrive S two-pulley system to offer infinitely varying gear ratios that are electronically matched to engine speed, driver inputs, engine load, vehicle load and driving conditions. It also has a low speed lock-up clutch and it weights 30 kg less than a conventional auto transmission. It therefore offers better acceleration than other CVT transmissions and improved fuel consumption compared to conventional auto transmissions."

I like. A no nonsense multi-purpose vehicle. Great build quality. Spacious. Tiltability of seats makes life easier when additional load space is required. Controls easy to understand and to operate. Performance sufficient for what it is meant for. Press a button and you're in sport mode for extra performance. A CVT gearbox with paddle shifts on the steering column might irritate Jeremy Clarkson; I like it more than Groenkloof wors. Big rear door makes loading easy.



I don't like. Alex Issigonis put the instruments of the first Mini in the centre of the console and got away with it. Those who copy it nowadays – like the Verso designers – should be hung by the baloobas. It's a fad with no benefits. Bling-like surrounds for front and rear lights. Massive rear-view mirrors might improve rear view but cause forward blind spots. In certain areas the interior finish is not up to Toyota standards. Limited ground clearance.



Overall. A modern mom's taxi with a lot to offer dad too. Verso is undoubtedly Toyota's best kept secret. Try it. You might buy it.

Technical. Petrol. 4 cylinders. 1 794 cc. 95 kW @ 6 000 r/min. 170 Nm @ 4 200 r/min. CVT transmission. 10,9 litres/100 km/h (combined cycle). 179 g/km emission. 193 km/h maximum. 12,9 seconds zero to 100 km/h.

Service/warranty. Service every 30 000 km. Oil change every 15 000 km. Warranty 3 years/100 000 km. 3 years anti-corrosion. 3 years roadside assistance. 5 years/90 000 km service plan.

Price as tested. R283 500.

Sparring partners. Mazda5. Peugeot 5008. Renault Scenic. VW Touran.