

First drive

Can clever Toyota topple Smart?

Space-saving Toyota



TOYOTA iQ

The iQ is an all-new city car from Toyota, only slightly longer than a Smart ForTwo but with space for four (at a squeeze).

It's claimed to be the world's smallest four-seater car, and its vital statistics look good: 99g/km CO2 and 66mpg.

The iQ aims to offer a viable alternative to the ForTwo but, like the Smart, it's expensive for what it offers, starting at £9,495.

It comes with a 1.0-litre 68bhp petrol engine in the UK, with a 1.3 to follow in mid-2009.

Toyota has decided not to offer a diesel – the 1.0 petrol claims outstanding economy and CO2 figures, anyway. It should also be very cheap to run.

Thanks to its low emissions, the iQ is exempt from annual road tax until at least until 2011, saving you a minimum of £55.

The iQ is solid, stable and easy to drive, but not as lively as you might hope in town. Somewhat unexpectedly, it's great on the motorway, with a reasonably comfy and quiet ride.

You do get a lot of extras, which partly justifies the price – air-con is standard, as is a leather steering wheel, electric mirrors and electronic stability control. But, overall, we feel the iQ may struggle to find buyers over other trendy city cars.



Can the Mégane still shake its stuff?

French correction

RENAULT MEGANE

The distinctive posterior is gone, but Renault hopes the new Mégane will still turn heads. It comes as a five-door hatch, or a much racier three-door coupé. Renault claims to have improved reliability – but only time will tell if this car is any better than its predecessor.

The five-door Mégane is disappointingly frumpy, with none of the pizzazz of the Mégane concept car we saw earlier this year. The coupé carries over more

of the adventurous styling (to the detriment of rear seat space and driver visibility), and also gets lower, firmer suspension.

The coupé has a choice of petrol engines from 110-180bhp, and diesels from 86-130bhp. The five-door also has a base engine (a 1.6 100bhp petrol).

The Mégane is sharper to drive than before – the coupé, in particular, feels alert and lively. However, the coupé's

chassis is poor at soaking up bumps. The hatchback's ride is much less fidgety.

All versions get electronic stability control – a welcome addition to help avoid accidents.

VERDICT The new Mégane is no class leader, and it isn't cheap. The starting price is £13,995, while a mid-spec Dynamique five-door hatch is £17,895. However, discounts are likely to be substantial.



This month

For our latest first drive reviews, visit www.which.co.uk/cars throughout the month. You can view video test drives  for several important new models, and read our full first impressions.

MG TF driven

The MG TF is back – and straight to video, in our exclusive review footage online. It may be a 15-year-old design, but new owners Nanjing Automotive have attempted to revive it. It has a tough job competing with modern convertibles.



Nissan Qashqai+2

Nissan has taken its already very popular Qashqai hatchback-cum-4x4 and bolted on an extra 21cm in overall length and two more seats in the rear. What the car loses in charm and agility it makes up for in practicality. Watch our online video review for more.



New Toyota Avensis

It may not be exciting or particularly good looking, but the new Avensis is likely to continue Toyota's tradition for making reliable, comfortable family cars at sensible prices. We've just driven it – you can read our first impressions exclusively online.



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