

# Toyota Previa



**I**F BIG REALLY IS BEAUTIFUL AND size does matter, the new Previa has got it made. Unlike its more ovoid predecessor, the svelte looking newcomer features a front-engine, front-wheel drive layout that's created more interior space within the same overall length.

Eight seats are available in the GL and GLS models, but this top-of-the-range CDX is a seven seater only, with individual second and third row seats. Five of these heavy and cumbersome chairs lift out in familiar fashion – there's no clever Zafira-style back seat folding here, and the front captain's chairs don't swivel either. All the back seats slide and recline, however, so there's excellent kneeroom and legroom all round.

Even those in the back don't feel like second-class citizens. True, their headroom isn't over-generous, but there are roof lamps and air vents for them, as well. Indeed, the CDX's equipment list is extensive, as a brochure browse will confirm.

For such a bulky vehicle, the Previa has a lively turn of speed. There's only one engine at present – a 2.4-litre petrol, but it's an impressive one – smooth, willing and a quiet cruiser. It's well matched to a technically unsophisticated yet very smoothly-operating automatic transmission that provides excellent part-throttle downshifts. It also has an overdrive (ie top gear) lock-out button that gives imperceptible thumb-flick downshifts to third.

The Previa rides very well and though naturally its weight and bulk restrict its cornering agility to some extent, it feels wieldy enough in the bends, aided by light and positive steering – but does this have to be quite so low geared?

The driver's seat and steering wheel are adjustable for height and there's a lot of rearward travel for the lanky. All round vision is fine without the head restraints in situ, but we're none too keen on the dark-tinted rear privacy glass, which may look "cool", but makes life difficult when reversing at night. We're ambivalent about the Optitron dials, too – they have bright, crystal clear clarity but are fussily calibrated.

With all seven seats in place there's room for a pile of medium-sized suitcases in the "boot". And, of course, the load space increases progressively with each seat removed, culminating in a hangar-like cargo area with the Previa as a two-seater.

## VERDICT

**You pay a bit over the odds for the Previa, but in return you're rewarded with a big, stylish and practical MPV that performs well, rides smoothly and offers generous accommodation for passengers and luggage into the bargain. It not only represents strong competition to long-established rivals, but by being such a pleasing all-rounder, it's on a par with the best of them. Highly recommended.**

## AT A GLANCE

*considering size, price and rivals*

<b>Overtaking ability</b>	★★★★○○
<b>Space/practicality</b>	★★★★○○
<b>Controls/displays</b>	★★★★○○
<b>Safety</b>	★★★○○○
<b>Handling/steering</b>	★★★★○○
<b>Comfort</b>	★★★★○○
<b>Fuel economy</b>	★★★○○○

## SPECIFICATION

**engine** 2362cc, 4-cylinder, petrol; 154bhp at 5600rpm, 166 lb ft at 4000rpm; chain-driven double overhead camshafts, 16 valves

**transmission** 4-speed stepped automatic (with torque converter), front-wheel drive; 24.7mph/1000rpm in top gear

**suspension** front: independent damper/struts with integral coil springs and an anti-roll bar. Rear: torsion beam (dead axle with coil springs and anti-roll bar

**steering** hydraulic power assistance; 3.7 turns lock-to-lock; 11.5m diameter turning circle between kerbs (20.6m for one turn of the wheel)

**brakes** ventilated discs front, solid discs rear, with standard electronic anti-lock (ABS) and brake force distribution (EBD)

**wheels/tyres** 6½in alloy with 205/65R15H tyres (Yokohama Aspec

## LIKES ...

easy-to-brush-out floors (no sills)  
puddle lights in front doors  
sensibly grouped warning lights

smooth, tactile heater controls  
roof lights and cool air vents for all

**and GRIPES**  
lying speedometer (reads 77mph at 70)  
lugging the 18kg seats in and out  
hi-fi's vulgar juke box appearance  
stiff-to-unclip sun visors  
poor wiper sweep for front passenger

## THE PREVIA RANGE

**Type and size** large 5-door (premium priced) MPV - 7/8 seats

**trim levels** GS (8 seats), GLS (7 or 8), CDX (7)

**engines** petrol: 4 cylinder/2.4 litre/154bhp  
diesel: due in spring 2001

**drive** front-wheel drive, 5-speed manual standard on GS only (4-speed stepped automatic standard on GLS and CDX, optional on GS)

OVERTAKING ABILITY		★★★★○		
<i>Eager 2.4 litre engine and standard four-speed automatic transmission are smooth operators and work well together. With 154bhp under the bonnet, performance is brisk yet motorway cruising is relaxed</i>				
acceleration in seconds	using kickdown in D - fully automatic (to 5750 rpm)			
20-40mph	3.5	30-40mph	3.5	
30-50mph	4.5	30-50mph	4.5	
40-60mph	5.5	30-60mph	7.5	
50-70mph	7.3	30-70mph	11.8	
<b>30-70mph</b>	<b>11.8</b>			
max speed in each gear (*using kickdown for best acceleration)				
gear	①*	②*	③*	④
speed (mph)	36	66	103	116


SPACE AND PRACTICALITY		★★★★○	
<i>Sliding side doors a boon, but you need to be nimble to get to the back. Useful "pile-'em-high" boot space, even with seven occupants. Heavy seats awkward to remove/refit, but huge cargo space results</i>			
<i>in centimetres (5-door MPV)</i>		<i>inside † with sunroof (+5cm if sunshade retracted)</i>	
<b>outside</b>		front - legroom	88-109
length	475	- headroom	95-100†
width - inc mirrors	207	mid/ - typical leg/	108/91
- mirrors folded	182	rear kneeroom	88/66
height (inc roof bars)	181	rows <sup>o</sup> - headroom	94†/90
load sill height	12/66	- hiproom	153/127
(inside/outside)		<b>load space (all seats in use)</b>	
<b>steering</b>		(litres/cu ft)	410/14.5-525/18.5
turns lock-to-lock	3.7	load length	43-223
turning circle (metres)	11.5	full length to fascia	303
easy to park/garage?		load width	103-154
	★★★★○	load height (to shelf/	67/
○middle row fully rearwards		to top of aperture)	108

CONTROLS AND DISPLAYS		★★★★○	
<i>Column stalks work most switches, others well placed but radio buttons fiddly. "Projected" dials clear if fussy, but speedo exaggerates wildly. "Walking stick" gear selector looks odd yet works proficiently</i>			
			

SAFETY		★★★★○	
<i>No side or roof airbags - only front pair. All seats have three-point belts except centre one (lap only). Two Isofix child seat systems provided, ABS and EBD standard and brake pedal decouples in a crash</i>			
braking	dry road stopping distance		
pedal feel	★★★★○	from 50mph (with standard ABS)	
in emergency	★★★★○	pedal load	distance
handbrake	★★★○○○	8kg	29m
		12kg	26m <b>best stop</b>
		+4kg ie 16kg	27m <b>ABS on</b>

EURO NCAP CRASH TEST RATINGS
Previa not yet tested

SECURITY FEATURES			
central locking	✓	alarm	✓
remote control	✓	immobiliser	✓
auto window closure	✗	luggage security	★★★★○
deadlocks	✓		
✓ standard	0 factory option	✗ not available	

HANDLING AND STEERING		★★★★○	
<i>Low geared steering is light but firms up with speed. Smooth and responsive with good self-centring. Despite its size, Previa can be hustled along in quite spirited fashion, but it wavers in a sidewind</i>			
			

COMFORT		★★★★○	
<i>Supple ride rarely wrong-footed. All seats slide and recline and provide generous legroom. Air con front and rear, twin sunroofs plus roof vents and lamps all round make cabin comfortably civilised</i>			

FUEL ECONOMY		★★★★○	
<i>Short stop-start journeys cane consumption, but over 30mpg possible on an easy run. A diesel version is due next spring. Big easy-to-fill tank gives a good range between forecourt visits</i>			
AA test results (mpg)	official figures (mpg)		
worst (hard/urban)	15	urban	19.5
best (gentle/rural)	32½	extra urban	32.5
<b>overall mpg on test</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>combined</b>	<b>26.2</b>
realistic tank capacity	63 litres	CO <sub>2</sub> emissions	259g/km
typical range	345 miles	car tax band	D

HOW THE PREVIA AUTO COMPARES	engine cap/power (cyl/cc/bhp)	revs at 70mph (rpm)	30-70mph through gears (sec)	30-70mph in 5th/4th gears (sec)	fuel economy (mpg)	brakes* - best stop from 50mph (m/kg)	maximum legroom - front (cm)	typical leg/ kneeroom - rear (cm)	steering turns/ (p) circle (m)	overall length (cm)
<b>TOYOTA PREVIA 2.4 AUTO</b>	4/2362/154	2830	11.8	NA	25	26/12	109	108/88	3.7/11.5	475
<b>Ford Galaxy 2.3 (man)</b>	4/2295/145	3290	11.0	26.3/19.9	29	26/25	108	104/84	3.3/11.3	462
<b>Honda Shuttle 2.2 (auto)</b>	4/2156/150	2950	12.2	NA	24½	27½/14	108	105/72	3.2/12.1	475
<b>Kia Sedona 2.5 V6 (man)</b>	6/2497/162	3010	11.5	35.0/23.7	25	26/22½	109	103/77	3.6/12.9	489
<b>Peugeot 806 2.0 (man)</b>	4/1998/123	3210	13.4	35.1/23.4	30	27/25	102	97/78	3.0/11.8	445
<b>Renault Espace 2.2dT (man)</b>	4/2188/115	2720	14.0	28.0/18.2	33	27/20	109	100/83	3.1/10.8	452

\* all with ABS