



2015 Toyota Avensis Saloon

By Tim Barnes-Clay, Motoring Journalist
Twitter: @carwriteups
www.carwriteups.co.uk



Toyota's latest Avensis is a work of genius. True, not so long ago, the model once looked bland and, more often than not, had a 'minicab for hire' sign glowing from its roof - but now the car is handsome enough for people to stop and ask what it is.

I had this happen a couple of times with the mid-range 2.0 D-4D Business Edition saloon I drove. In fact, one guy asked if it was a Lexus. "Not far off", I said. He was amazed the car was a Toyota. All this is because the car has been given new styling, more equipment and cleaner engines to further appeal to business users.

The external alterations are particularly far-reaching. While it's still identifiable as an Avensis, the whole nose has been remoulded to parrot the petite Yaris and renewed Auris. The Avensis also gets LED daytime running lights and LED lights at the rear.

Little touches, such as alloy wheels that you'd expect to buy as an optional extra and side sills that now give the car a perceived lower centre of gravity, are the icing on the cake.

Inside, the car is a match for many German executive motors. Soft touch materials cover the cabin, and a leather steering wheel, air conditioning and an automatic handbrake add another tier of quality. What's more, automatic high beams, lane departure warning and road sign recognition make long distance driving stress free. Other features, like a touchscreen sat-nav, DAB, and rain sensing wipers help, too.

On the road, the 2015 Avensis is one of the best commuting machines out there. It glides over bumps and eats up motorway miles without any effort at all. The dials and switches on the dash and on the steering wheel are very clear and simple to use, and the six speed manual gearbox, which was fitted to my test model, is smooth and a doddle to operate. ➔



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The seating position is high, but comfort is top notch, helped by an exceptionally effective electric lumbar support system. Okay, the featherweight steering can be a little less than successful at communicating what's going on beneath the wheels, but it makes driving easy - especially when weaving through traffic or parking.

So, despite starting off as a bit dull when it was first made in 1997, the Avensis is proving to be one of the most popular cars around. By the end of 2010, more than 1.8 million Avensis vehicles had been built - all at Burnaston in Derbyshire. And now, with a major new look and extensive changes, the Toyota Avensis has thrust itself to the top of its class to be one of the best saloons for value. It's certainly a car worth considering for business or for family motoring. It's a cracker - I promise you.

PROS

- Looks
- Comfort
- Kit
- Value

CONS

- Steering lacks feel

FAST FACTS

- Max speed: 124 mph
- 0-62 mph: 9.5 secs
- Combined mpg: 62.8
- Engine: 1995 cc 4 cylinder 16 valve turbo diesel
- Max. power (bhp): 141
- Max. torque (lb/ft): 236
- CO2: 119 g/km
- Price: £23,155 on the road