

LIKES	DISLIKES
Build quality Versatility Fuel Economy	Tyre noise Clutch operation Rear seat/luggage space

It's ten years since the first RAV4 appeared on the scene. Combining car like performance and dynamics with off road capability the cheeky looking Toyota became an instant hit. A new market emerged and compact SUV's were here to stay. In 2000 an all new RAV4 arrived to carry on the original's success. Since its launch in 1994 more than 1.6 million have been sold and today against increased competition it is still one of the best sellers in its category.

Now fitted with a more powerful 2.4 litre – 120kW engine (up 10kW) the range comprises four models starting with the CV 3door and 5door priced at \$28,390 and \$31,290, moving up to the 3door and 5door Cruiser at \$33,490 and \$36,490. Add \$2,000 for automatic transmission and \$240 for metallic paint. Standard equipment on the CV 3door tested includes air-conditioning, cruise control, power steering, power windows, single stack – four speaker CD player plus a body colour spare wheel cover. Dual airbags are standard fitment for the CV but ABS brakes are not available. For those you will have to step up to the Cruiser model which also has an optional \$2,700 Safety Pack consisting of Brake Assist, traction control, VSC (vehicle stability control) plus side and curtain airbags.

With its heavily sculpted lines and short overhangs the current RAV4 builds on the original's distinctive style. Inside the dashboard is more reminiscent of a sports car than a 4wd. A deep binnacle houses the instruments while the audio and climate controls are mounted within easy reach in the wide centre dash panel.

For the driver and front passenger high mounted sports style seats give an excellent view of the road ahead. All round vision is good but reversing is difficult, the view blocked by the rear seat head restraints and door mounted spare wheel. Even at its lowest setting the short cushion feels angled towards the floor, reducing any thigh support. Increasing the driver's seat height doesn't improve things as the seat base pivots from the front. While comfort is good the seats lack any substantial lateral support. On the plus side, leg and head room are excellent and the tilt steering wheel adjusts through a reasonable range. With only room for two in the back there is enough space to make most people happy but once again the cushion is short and the seats are mounted between the wheelarches resulting in an offset seating position. Once you've put your friends in the back the front seats don't return to their original position, which is a nuisance.

Finding homes for your bits and pieces isn't too difficult with a good size storage box under the centre armrest while door and seat pockets plus the glovebox will take care of most other items. Luggage space is a different matter. With the rear seats in use the available load area is very poor but for two people this isn't a problem, the seats can be folded, or removed, creating a large flat area, but the cabin's open layout does compromise security.

Around town the high seating position and light steering make life easy in heavy traffic. While the performance is good, the 2.4 litre's torque isn't as flexible as you might expect and you need to put the gearbox to good use to get the most out of it. Not a difficult task given its positive, notchy action which is in contrast to the soft inconsistent clutch that made smooth take offs difficult. There is also some drivetrain noise evident at lower speeds and road noise from the tyres is intrusive over coarse bitumen.

Ride quality is quite good over most surfaces, but with its short wheelbase and high profile tyres bigger bumps lead to some pitching of the body. On the open road the features which make the RAV so nimble in the suburbs conspire against it at higher speeds. Away from the freeway on the tighter tarmac sections of our test the RAV is a determined understeerer, lacking the responsiveness expected from its short wheelbase. The steering retains the same weight no matter what terrain or speed you are travelling at, but it has a numb feel more than likely due to the all terrain tyres. Encountering bumps while cornering will get the car pitching and bouncing reducing ride comfort noticeably. Light duty off road driving showed off the RAV's capable traction on loose surfaces, but corrugations can catch out the suspension and in such a light vehicle this means some loss of grip. As far as braking performance is concerned the RAV is adequate, but the pedal lacks feel and under hard braking for our test it was easy to lock the front wheels.

SUMMARY:

The RAV4 contains the qualities Toyota is famous for. It is well built and uses proven mechanicals. As a day to day commuter car it is has a lot to offer, its light controls, high seating position and nimble nature making peak hour and suburban commuting a breeze. Away from the big smoke it is a competent performer, but in give and take conditions its ride and handling can feel under done, taking the gloss off the package.



TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE

Type..... Four cylinder DOHC 16v
Capacity in litres.....2.362
Induction.....Electronic Fuel Injection
Fuel recommendation ULP
Claimed max. power..... 120kW@5700rpm
Claimed max. torque..... 224Nm@4000rpm

TRANSMISSION

Type.....5-speed manual
Driving wheelsAWD

WHEELS

..... Steel 16"x 6.5
TyresBridgestone Dueler 215/70R16 99H
Spare Full size on steel wheel

STEERING

Type.....Power assisted rack & pinion
Turns lock to lock.....3.0
Turning circle.....10.2m

DIMENSIONS

Mass..... 1250kg
Length.....3860mm
Width (incl. mirrors).....1960mm
Height1665mm
Ground clearance (measured) 183mm
Seating capacity.....4
Fuel tank capacity.....57 litres

TOWING

Max. towed mass (trailer plus load).... 1500kg
Max. towball download (laden trailer).... 150kg

NRMA THEFT RATING

Points on 0-110 scale (high score best).....77.5

WARRANTY 3 years / 100,000k

MANUFACTURED IN Japan

TEST RESULTS

ACCELERATION

50 - 80 km/h (in 3rd)..... 5.1sec
60 -100 km/h (in 3rd)..... 6.8sec
0 -80 km/h..... 6.4sec
0 - 100 km/h..... 10.1sec
0 - 400 metres 16.9sec

FUEL CONSUMPTION (litres/100 km)

Best recorded during testing.....8.6
Worst recorded during testing12.7
Average on test.....9.8

BRAKING

Distance to stop from 80 km/h.... 30.8metres

NOISE

Interior at constant 80 km/h..... 67.3dB(A)

Test vehicle supplied by
Toyota Motor Corporation Australia
www.toyota.com.au