



Toyota GT86

Bad boy

Review | Toyota is always the best boy in the class. The Avensis is neither exciting nor innovative, yet more than a rational choice for a company car. The Yaris is the most mature small car on the market. The Prius is the icon of green, politically correct driving. Now, Toyota introduces something completely different: the "GT86". It is meant to be the bad boy in the class.

The best boy in the class has one big advantage: good students have vast knowledge. The Toyota GT86 is a pure-bred racing car, but not one that relies on brute force. The strong point of this fun car is its clever design.

While designing, fun to drive was paramount. Performance is an important ingredient, but it is not the most important part. According to Toyota great handling is what makes a car a joy to drive.

It all starts with a small car, because a compact car is lighter and thus more agile by nature. To achieve the best possible handling, Toyota lowered the centre of gravity as far as possible. Also, the weight has been distributed almost evenly over the front and rear wheels (53/47).

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Performance

To concentrate the weight as low as possible, Toyota opted for a so-called "boxer engine" (from Subaru). To state it simply: a regular engine stands upright, while a boxer engine lays on its side. Another benefit of the boxer engine is its relatively simple construction, which makes it more reliable.

The downside is the poor fuel economy. To make it very clear: compared to the competition the GT86 delivers less power while using more fuel.

That is... on paper. Once behind the steering wheel the GT86 feels like a razor sharp and lightening quick sports car that can outperform everyone and everything. This is thanks to the way the engine builds up to its maximum output. The GT86 engine does its work without a turbo or other aids and therefore it seems it's constantly building up to a peak.



Adding to the sensation is the so-called "sound generator". This deliberately feeds the sound of the engine (or rather: the air intake) into the cabin. Outside the car a modest sound can be heard, while on the inside the power train seems to roar.

Gearbox

The GT86 with manual gearbox sprints from 0 to 62 mph in 7.6 seconds. That's quick, but several rivals are even faster. The brakes match up to the engine power, however, they never seem to really bite.

Optionally, the GT86 can be fitted with an automatic six-speed gearbox. In that case sprinting to 62 mpg takes 8.2 seconds. This isn't because the automatic shifts gears slowly (0.2 seconds), but because of the different ratios. When choosing sports mode, the automatic gearbox operates the throttle while shifting, to prevent the engine from losing speed. In short: the automatic gearbox does not affect the sporty character of the GT86.



Handling

With a sports car it is all about excitement and sheer driving pleasure, not the performance itself. Many luxury cars can accelerate faster than a sports car in a straight line. Only a sports car communicates with the driver, dares the driver and turns every ride into a treat.



This all starts with the position behind the steering wheel. The GT86 almost forces the driver into an active seating position, so the driver has the best possible control over the steering wheel. The seating position is, of course, as low as possible to optimise weight distribution. A big problem are the seats: the backrest is too narrow around the shoulders, which is very uncomfortable for tall drivers.

Despite the electrical power steering, steering is direct and communicative. The suspension is firm, yet leaving enough comfort for everyday use. Thanks to this set-up, even unexperienced drivers intuitively feel what the chassis is capable of. He/she will automatically balance the car in the corners and steer beautiful lines. From that moment on, the GT86 seems to come alive.



When doing so the GT86 feels light-footed and agile, which in turn is an invitation to increase speeds even more. Even when making a mistake the GT86 never understeers. As it should be with a sport car, the engine powers the rear wheels. Also, thanks to this the back end will step aside when provoked. Or to phrase it more positively: an experienced driver can steer this vehicle with the accelerator pedal.

To ensure safety, Toyota fitted a very effective electronic stability programme ("ESP"). In sports mode it allows for some slipping and sliding, so the average driver feels like a hero while in fact safety is still guaranteed. Real racing drivers can completely turn off ESP to make the most out of the car.



Daily commute

When the fun and games come to an end, the GT86 can be used for the daily commute just as easily. All

creature comforts one expects from a car in this segment are present. However, do not expect the refinement of a luxury sedan. Toyota spent every dime on improving the fun factor, not on ergonomics or luxury. Regrettably Toyota fits the GT86 with its basic satnav. This is less clear than the old system, as seen on the Prius and iQ. The sound quality of the audio system also disappoints for an entertainer like this.

The boot measures 243 litres, making it actually usable. In daily life the back seats mostly act as an extra storage space. Because of the minimal legroom, even small children don't fit in the back. One of the designers of the car put it like this: "the back seat is mostly an excuse to buy the GT86 as a family car. How to actually transport with my wife and children is a problem I'll solve later">. He must have been the bad boy of his class.



Conclusion

The best boy in the class now wants to be a bad boy. A lengthy test drive confirms that Toyota certainly reached its goal. Compared with its rivals the GT86 is the most rewarding car to drive in its segment.

If this bad boy will also be a popular boy remains to be seen. Although the GT86 is a fast car, the competition is even faster. On top of that, the competing models from other brands are cheaper to buy and run. However, if it is all about emotion and excitement, the GT86 beats them all. ■



Specifications

Toyota GT86 gt86 automatic

Size and weight



Length x width x height	424 x 178 x 129 cm
Wheelbase	257 cm
Kerb weight	1.262 kg
Trailer	unknown
Trailer - braked	unknown
Fuel capacity	50 l
Luggage space	243 l
Tyre size	215/45R17

Engine and performance



Capacity	1998 cc
Cylinders / valves	4/4
Max power	200 PS @ 7000 rpm
Max torque	205 Nm @ 6400 rpm
Drive	rear wheels
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	8.2 secs
Top speed	210 km/h
Average mileage	7.1 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	9.6 l / 100 km
Mileage extra urban	5.7 l / 100 km
CO2 emissions	164 gr / km

Price

Price	Â£ 26,495
Price base model	Â£ 24,995