

## **The Honda Fit, Toyota Yaris and Nissan Versa in Miami**

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*Article comparing these three vehicles by Kurt Gensheimer*

Honda Fit, Toyota Yaris and Nissan Versa Comparison - The New Big 3's Little 3.

By Kurt Gensheimer

From Carreview.com

Whether or not you've grown up as a car buff, unless you're a troglodyte who still walks barefoot from point A to point B, you're probably familiar with who "The Big 3" automakers comprise. And if you've watched any of the executive groveling before our esteemed panel of D.C. dunderheads we call our "leaders", then you're absolutely familiar with The Big 3. However in the aftermath of Toyota's recent ascension past GM to become the number #1 selling automotive brand in the world - in addition to its involvement in NASCAR and multiple American manufacturing plants - the old Big 3 moniker may need revision to include Toyota.

And who would be "The Other 2"? Honda and Nissan seem to fit the role quite well, with similarly expanding market share and multiple U.S.-based factories. Yes, it seems that when people nowadays refer to "The Big 3", there needs to be some level of clarification - New School or Old School?

**SECOND RUNNER UP: 2009 Toyota Yaris**

The Yaris is widely known as the Corolla's smaller brother, which is like discovering that Danny Devito actually has a shorter sibling. Although the Yaris is short on size and weight - it's the shortest five door hatch in this comparison by 11 inches and comes in at a cross-wind swooning 2300 pounds - the Yaris offers a fair amount of car for its \$14K base price. Not to mention the fact that you can fit this car in parking spaces that the Fit and Versa would have to guillotine both bumpers for.

Road manners for the Yaris are passable, but just barely. The Yaris doesn't mask the fact that you're driving a graduated tin can with an engine that barely registers triple digits in the power department. And like many other modern Toyota products, the steering is slow, dead and disconnected. Just because you've become the biggest selling brand in the world doesn't mean you automatically make cars that are fun to drive. Actually, I can't think of one new Toyota that's fun to drive anymore, which didn't used to be the case, but I digress.

Value-wise, the Yaris is just okay. For a \$14K base price, you only get A/C and a tilt wheel. Items like power door locks and windows - which come standard on the less expensive, bigger, and more powerful Versa - are tack-on options with the Yaris. But of course, what you don't get in features you do get in bona-fide, run-it-till-kingdom-come Toyota reliability.

Safety-wise, the Yaris is also just okay, and in this comparison, finishes last in safety with only a 3-star NHTSA ranking for side impact. So for those who hate taking risks and are willing to sacrifice a little safety for the "the sure thing" reliability of Toyota, the Yaris might be a wise decision.

**FIRST RUNNER UP: 2009 Nissan Versa**

The Versa comes to this New Big 3 comparison technically classed as a midsize car, not a sub-compact. But by only looking at the Versa S base price of \$13,800, you'd never guess it offers a 122 horsepower engine, A/C, cruise, CD stereo, and power windows and door locks, all standard. What's more impressive is what Versa is offering for 2009 - a new base level Versa 1.6 which actually comes in below \$10K at \$9,990

(before destination charge)! This is a low enough price for the Versa to dethrone the Chevy Aveo as the least expensive car in America. Granted, the base Versa has a smaller, 106 horsepower engine, no A/C, cruise, power windows or radio for that matter, but hey, what do you expect for \$9,990?

So the Versa technically offers the most car for the least amount of money in this comparison, but is the quality of the Versa greater than its price? The answer is a resounding Yes. Based on our road test of the 2008 Versa S, we think that the Versa is without question one of the best values in all of autopia. Name another car that can deliver so many standard features, highest safety ratings, a 122 horsepower engine that gets up to 33 mpg, a six-speed manual transmission and rear seat legroom almost as spacious as a 5-series BMW at a sub-\$15K price. Having trouble? That's right. You can't. When it comes to outright value, the Versa stands alone. Then consider the new Versa 1.6 at below \$10K, which, quality-wise, demoralizes the former low-buck title holder, Chevy Aveo, and the case for the Versa is overwhelming.

There's nothing wrong with basic transportation?, but if you're going to live with this car every day, wouldn't you like a little more personality? I mean, think about it for a minute. Did you marry your spouse because he or she fit the parameters for basic procreation?, or did you marry your spouse because he or she made you laugh and feel good about yourself? This is the elemental difference between the Versa and the Fit. WINNER: 2009 Honda Fit

Honda is widely recognized as the first Japanese automaker to really hit on the economy aspect of car ownership. Honda's 1972 introduction of the highly fuel-efficient, low-emission and even lower horsepower CVCC engine may have been greeted by riotous laughter in Detroit, but today the laughter has quelled to a low, rolling sob. With the exception of Americanized aberrations like the Pilot and Ridgeline, Honda has remained true to its original intent of making fuel-efficient, low-emissions cars that are fun to drive and practical to live with.

And there is no other car in the history of Honda that more perfectly embodies those original attributes than the Fit. Yes, that's some high praise, especially considering how many great cars Honda has made over the years. Think of the Fit as a CRX station wagon - a concept which fits the needs of many car buyers. Consider all these highlights, and you'll quickly see why the Fit is such an appropriate name for this machine.

- Fit is fuel efficient - 28 mpg around town and 35 mpg on the highway.
- Fit is well-built - Quiet road manners, top-shelf interior materials and design.
- Fit is well-appointed - Base model comes with power everything and options like voice-controlled navigation only found on more expensive models.
- Fit is practical - Best-in-class 57.3 cu. ft. of cargo room with one lever pull to fold-flat rear seats.
- Fit is innovative - Rear Magic Seat allows the seat bottoms to be folded up for additional cargo capacity.

And most importantly, at least for this author, Fit's fun to drive - Granted the 117 horsepower 1.5 liter VTEC four banger won't get you anywhere in a hurry, but it's handling characteristics are endearing and never fail to put a smile on the driver's face.

Although this car is a remarkable achievement of practicality, fuel-efficiency, value and fun, there are a few areas where the Fit could be fitter. Although the four-cylinder VTEC motor does just fine with an empty galley, as soon as you pile in your cronies and load up the back with cronie crap, the Fit's acceleration goes from adequate to anemic. And although the Fit's navigation system is one of the most technologically advanced and easy-to-use units on the market, the Fit curiously has no satellite radio option.

A \$16K base price is definitely a bit high for an entry-level, sub-compact, especially considering it's \$2,000 gap over the next most expensive car in this comparison (Yaris), but as the old adage goes, "you get

what you pay for". Anyone who drives the Fit will agree that it's worth the extra coin. The only question is, do you have the extra coin?

Test drive a Fit in Miami at Brickell Honda. Visit them online at <http://www.brickellhonda.com> or call them at (888)407-9334.

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