

New 2013 Toyota Innova vs Tata Aria

The Innova's ruled its segment for a while now, but there isn't much separating the updated version's new Z trim and a top-end Aria. Which is better?

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photos



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What's new?

The [Toyota](#) Innova SUV has been in the Indian market for quite some time. It was first launched here in 2005 and this is its third facelift. Customers, however, are still lapping it up and Toyota sells an average of 4,800 Innovas a month. But with fresher competition having hit our market over the past few years, the Innova's sales have seen a slight decline, which explains why Toyota has tried to keep things fresh and introduced this facelift. The most noticeable change is the massive three-slat chrome grille and the fog lamp surrounds, also layered with chrome. There's a big chrome strip on the new SUV that runs along the sides, but the rear is pretty much unchanged, save for some chrome garnish on the boot.

The very capable [Tata](#) Aria is an SUV we really like, and it's a real shame that Tata's MPV got off to such a poor start. It is one of the most comfortable cars in its class (more so on long drives),

it's bigger than the Innova and this translates to acres of room inside, it's got a powerful yet frugal 2.2-litre diesel engine, and it's built to be tough. With the Innova's prices headed skyward, the top-of-the-line Z trim that we're driving is only Rs 3,000 cheaper than the fully-loaded Tata Aria 4x4 Pride, which is priced at Rs 15.10 lakh. The question is, does the Tata Aria SUV deserve a second look at this price, or is the Innova still good enough? [Continued..](#)

What are they like to drive?

The Innova is the nicer to drive of the two, especially in the city. The clutch and steering are light and easy to use. In fact, it feels almost like a mid-size saloon to drive, despite its size. The Toyota's larger engine coupled with its lighter body means that it's quicker to respond to your right foot, which is useful, especially in traffic; it's easy to slot the SUV into gaps between cars. At high speeds, it's stable and quite comfortable too and the suspension does a good job of absorbing the rough stuff. However, with a full load, the Innova does tend to bob a bit on the highway. The Toyota Innova's engine is also the more vocal of the two, and the noise and lack of power are something you'll definitely notice when you're driving fast. Another grouse we had is with the long-throw gear lever; though nice to slot, it looks and feels a bit tacky in a car like this.



Start the Tata Aria up and you'll notice that the engine feels quite refined – it's much quieter than the Innova's 2.5-litre unit, and the SUV is also the quieter of the two on the move. The one we're driving is the 4x4 variant, but there's a small button that changes it to 4x2 mode, and this sends power only to the rear wheels, which improves fuel efficiency. In 4x4 mode, whenever the car is short on grip, the engine can send up to 45 percent of its power to the front wheels, but you will rarely find need to use this mode in everyday driving situations. The Aria is 200mm longer than the Innova, so naturally, parking it in the city is a task on its own. And although the Aria is quite nice to drive, the gearbox, clutch and steering aren't of the same quality or as light to use as the Innova's. [Continued..](#)

Ride and Handling

Both these cars are huge MPVs, so they're going to handle like big MPVs. The Aria has more body roll when you take it round a corner quickly, while the Innova feels a bit more composed and points into corners well. Once you get used to the roll on the Aria, however, it drives really well too, giving the driver plenty of confidence from the hydraulic power assisted steering wheel.



The Aria even drives well when fully loaded; the suspension soaks up bumps well and little of it can be felt in the cabin. And despite having a smaller engine, the Aria is quicker to 100kph than

the Innova by 1.84 seconds. The Toyota's engine produces less overall power and as a result can't hold on to high speeds for prolonged periods.

What are they like inside?

The Toyota's cabin holds on to its airy feel, and to justify the premium, there's a new faux wood finish on the armrests and gear knob and hints of chrome on the dash, which lift the ambience of the cabin. The steering wheel is the same as the one on the Corolla and the fit and finish and overall feel of the buttons and wheel are solid. In fact, the entire dashboard feels solidly built.

This top-spec Z version of the Innova is a new trim in the range and it comes only with individual 'captain' seats for the middle row. However, the lower variants have the option of a conventional bench instead. The seats are very comfortable, especially on long drives, but the third row is a little lacking in thigh support and is best suited for children. The middle row is adjustable and can be moved forward to liberate more room for the third-row passengers. Legroom for the middle row is good, but the Aria is more spacious thanks to its longer wheelbase and overall length.

The Innova comes equipped with a very useful rear-view camera that uses the touchscreen infotainment system as a display, but the lack of parking sensors means that you can't afford to take your eyes off the screen.



Step into the Aria and the cabin, though airy, doesn't feel as premium as the Toyota's. There are nice bits though, like the air-con vents that are neatly integrated into the dash within the faux wood panels. However, the entire dash doesn't feel as solid as the Innova's. The Aria's steering-mounted controls feel flimsy and you often end up pressing them when you're turning the wheel. The Aria is huge, so it's a good thing it has parking sensors, which are quite effective, and since our test car is the now-discontinued 4x4 'Pleasure' variant, it doesn't come with a reversing camera. The top 4x4 Pride variant, however, does get a camera. The air-con unit, though effective on the whole, doesn't do as good a job cooling the front two seats as the Innova's unit, so if you're driving on a hot summer's day, you're going to feel a little uncomfortable in the Aria.



The Aria comes with a second row bench and not captain seats. You sit higher in the Innova than in the Aria, but thigh support in the Tata is better, and its third row seats are comfier, especially on long drives. The Aria has lots of useful roof-mounted storage areas, more than you could have asked for in fact.

Overall, where the Innova trumps the Aria is clearly quality. The Tata just doesn't feel as well put together as the Toyota, which is possibly what puts some quality-conscious buyers off. [Continued..](#)

Buying and owning

The facelifted Toyota Innova is available in three trims – G, V and Z – and two configurations, a seven-seater and eight-seater (the Z is only a seven-seater). All of these versions are available only as diesels, but if you really want the petrol, it can be built to order. The base GX seven-seater costs Rs 12.45 lakh, and it's Rs 5,000 more for the eight-seater. The VX costs Rs 14.53 lakh and the newly introduced Z trim – the one we've tested – retails for Rs 15.06 lakh.

The Tata Aria is available in three configurations – 4x2 Pure, 4x2 Pleasure and 4x4 Pride. The 4x2 Pure costs Rs 10.17 lakh, while the 4x2 Pleasure costs Rs 12.32 lakh and the 4x4 costs Rs 15.10 lakh (Although our test car is the 4x4 Pleasure, it's a variant Tata doesn't offer anymore; you can only order the 4x4 in fully-specced Pride trim).

Bear in mind that Tata is trying hard to sell more Arias, so there are usually very tempting discounts on offer. Currently, the Aria is available for a discount ranging from Rs 1.5 – 2 lakh.

The Innova returns 10.3kpl in the city and 13.8kpl on the highway, while the Aria manages 9.8kpl in town and 13.8kpl out on the highway. So both cars are almost on par as far as efficiency is concerned.

Equipment and safety

The Innova comes with a decent amount of features. It's got a colour touchscreen with Bluetooth, aux and USB connectivity that doubles up as the reversing camera monitor. Other features include keyless entry, steering-mounted audio controls, driver's seat height adjustment and two airbags.

The Aria 4x4 is actually even better equipped. There's satellite navigation, cruise control, electrically adjustable wing mirrors, driver's seat height adjustment, rain-sensing wipers, a cooled glovebox and a total of six airbags. It's also got ABS and disc brakes for all four wheels; the Innova uses drum brakes at the rear.

Verdict

The Tata Aria has a lot going for it. It's a very capable and spacious MPV, it comes loaded with features and looks imposing on the road. It's a comfortable highway cruiser and is decently fuel efficient for its size. And with Tata offering tempting discounts on the car, it becomes even more

of a value proposition. It's clear that this is one severely underrated car. However, what lets it down is quality; the cabin just doesn't feel as well made as the Innova's and you get the feeling that the car is not built to last. The facelift has added to the Innova's appeal, but what really keeps it ahead is that it gets the basics right. Robustly engineered and beautifully built, the Innova feels like it will last you a really long time, and that makes the high asking price seem worth it. It's a car you know you can drive for over 1,00,000km without it feeling worse for wear. So although the Tata comes quite close, it's still the Innova that's the MPV king.

Comparison		
	Toyota Innova	Tata Aria
Engine	4 cyls, 2494cc, turbo diesel	4 cyls, 2197cc, turbo diesel
Power	102bhp at 3600rpm	138bhp at 4000rpm
Torque	20.4kgm at 1400-3600rpm	32.6kgm at 1700-2700rpm
Gearbox	5-speed manual	5-speed manual
Length	4525mm	4780mm
Width	1765mm	1895mm
Height	1760mm	1780mm
Wheelbase	2750mm	2850mm