

# Toyota RAV 4

**Featured model: 2.0VX 5-door**



**F**OLLOWING ON FROM THE HUGE increase in popularity of MPVs, the Sport Utility Vehicle (SUV) – a sort of 4x4-meets-estate-car with hints of MPV thrown in for good measure – is on a bit of a roll these days.

However, most of such lifestyle load-luggers will spend far more time fetching and carrying the weekly shopping and pounding the school run than will ever slope off into the scenery to exploit their surprisingly adept off-piste talents.

It wasn't the first of its type, but the original RAV 4 probably did more to define this "grass-and-gravel GTi" breed than any other. But with the likes of our home-grown Freelander and a growing clutch of pretenders from further afield now on the scene (not to mention "crossover" vehicles such as the Scenic RX4 and high-riding, all-wheel drive estate cars), the second-generation RAV 4 faces far more robust rivalry this time round.

It's off to a flying start, though, with three- and five-door versions separately conceived from the outset. While it lacks the coupé-like cosiness of the three-door's rear cabin, the family-sized RAV 4 provides space (and full three-point seatbelts) for three passengers on its wider back seat. Commendably, too, the 50/50 split-fold seats retain their three-door counterpart's MPV-style slide, fold and take-out flexibility.

Despite its bigger, bulkier appearance, the five-door largely retains its stablemate's agreeably lively road manners, as well. The eager, variable-

valve-timing two-litre is not only laudably smooth and willing at higher revs, but feels almost equally obliging lower down the scale.

With light, responsive steering, easy controls and displays, lofty comfortable seating and a wealth of creature comforts and cubby-holes around the cabin, life aboard the RAV 4 harbours few hassles.

Thanks to its 21cm-longer wheelbase (given over to "going large" on load space rather than boosting leg-stretching room for those in the back), the five-door maintains virtually all of the three-door's agile, light-on-its-feet ride and on-road refinement, but with less of its compatriot's fidgety, slightly hyperactive feel over the bumpy bits.

Unlike the truncated-tail four-seater, the five-door has room for the luggage to come, too, with the 38cm overall "stretch" yielding almost double the load space. It also gets a shelf/roller-blind load cover plus a liberal sprinkling of side-locker storage and tie-down hooks. Pity the side-hung rear door still only opens to about 45 degrees, though.

## VERDICT

**This bigger and roomier five-door RAV 4 feels more mature and family-friendly than its stubby sibling, with the two extra doors giving a big boost to the model's already abundant appeal. But not only that, it comes at little cost to the three-door's cheeky, "chuckable" character. It's a must for any SUV shopping list.**

## AT A GLANCE

*considering size, price and rivals*

<b>Overtaking ability</b>	★★★★○
<b>Space/practicality</b>	★★★★○
<b>Controls/displays</b>	★★★★○
<b>Safety</b>	★★★★○
<b>Handling/steering</b>	★★★★○
<b>Comfort</b>	★★★★○
<b>Fuel economy</b>	★★★○○

## SPECIFICATION

**engine** 1998cc, 4-cylinder, petrol; 147bhp at 6000rpm, 142 lb ft at 4000rpm; chain-driven DOHC, 16 valves, VVT-i variable valve timing

**transmission** 5-speed manual, full-time four-wheel drive; 20.9mph/1000rpm in 5th, 16.7 in 4th

**suspension** front: independent damper/struts, coil springs, anti-roll bar.

Rear: double wishbone/trailing arm, coil springs, anti-roll bar

**steering** hydraulic power assistance; 3.0 turns lock-to-lock; 11.1m diameter turning circle between kerbs (16.1m for one turn of the wheel)

**brakes** ventilated discs front, discs rear with standard anti-lock and brake force distribution on all versions

**wheels/tyres** 6½in alloy with 235/60R16 tyres (NRG and VX); (steel + 215/70R16 tyres on all other models); full-size spare

## LIKES ...

lofty, in-charge view/feel from cabin lithe on the road; capable off it, too dual load-shelf mounting heights no levers or diff locks to mess with

## and GRIPES

limited opening of side-hung tailgate less gain over 3-door than looks imply rear seats don't fold/tip to vertical top-spec models can look quite pricey

## THE RAV 4 RANGE

**size and type** upper medium (mid-priced) 3- and 5-door Sport Utility Vehicle

**trim levels** NV and NRG (3 door); NV, GX and VX (5 door)

**engines** petrol: 4 cylinder/1.8-litre/123bhp (3dr/fwd only); 4/2.0/147 on all 4x4s; diesel: 4/2.0/110

**drive** full-time 4-wheel drive, 5-speed manual; 1.8/front-wheel drive (3 door) and 4-speed automatic (2.0 petrol) options

OVERTAKING ABILITY <span style="float:right">★★★★○</span>					
<i>GTi-like feel and pace suffers little in roomier 5-door form, where obliging 147bhp 2-litre allied to slick, sporty gearing provides plenty of appeal. Eager top end, but amiable at gentler pace, too</i>					
acceleration in seconds	through gears*	③ <sup>rd</sup> gear	④ <sup>th</sup> gear	⑤ <sup>th</sup> gear	
20-40mph	3.1	5.9	8.1	11.7	
30-50mph	3.4	5.8	8.0	11.3	
40-60mph	4.5	5.8	8.4	11.8	
50-70mph	6.1	6.2	8.6	12.9	
<b>30-70mph</b>	<b>9.5</b>	<b>12.0</b>	<b>16.6</b>	<b>24.2</b>	
max speed in each gear (*using 6500rpm for best acceleration)					
gear	①*	②*	③*	④	⑤
speed (mph)	29	55	84	109	114

SPACE AND PRACTICALITY <span style="float:right">★★★★○</span>			
<i>Five-door gains a load cover, twice the luggage space and a few more conveniences over 3-door, with space for three on its wider back seat. Annoyingly, rear door still only opens to 45 degrees, though</i>			
<i>in centimetres (5-door SUV)</i>	<b>inside</b>	<i>(† with sunroof)</i>	
<b>outside</b>	front - legroom	84-110	
length	- headroom	96-101†	
width - inc mirrors	rear - typical leg/	98/	
- mirrors folded	kneeroom	73	
height (inc roof bars)	- headroom	97	
load sill height	- hiproom	128	
<i>(inside/outside)</i>	<b>load space</b> (all seats in use)		
<b>steering</b>	<i>(litres/cu ft)</i>	380/13.5	
turns lock-to-lock	load length	65/107/155 <sup>1</sup>	
turning circle (metres)	full length to fascia	238	
easy to park/garage?	load width	98-132	
	load height (to shelf)	34/60	
	<i>(to top of aperture)</i>	101	
		★★★★○	
<sup>1</sup> rear seats fully back/folded/removed			

CONTROLS AND DISPLAYS <span style="float:right">★★★★○</span>	
<i>Neat dials, easy controls and good hi-fi complement the high-set, "in-charge" driving position. Handbrake location particularly handy, but lever-type backrest angle controls won't suit all</i>	
	

HOW THE RAV 4 5-DOOR COMPARES										
	engine cyl/cap/power (no/cc/bhp)	revs at 70mph (rpm)	30-70mph through gears (sec)	30-70mph in 5th/4th gears (sec)	fuel economy (mpg)	brakes† - best stop from 50mph (m/kg)	maximum legroom - front (cm)	typical leg/ kneeroom - rear (cm)	steering turns/ circle (m)	overall length (cm)
TOYOTA RAV 4 2.0 5DR	4/1998/147	3350	9.5	24.2/16.6	29	26½/18	110	98/73	3.0/11.1	426
Honda HRV 1.6 VTEC 5dr	4/1590/122	3760	11.2	28.4/20.3	30	25½/16	107	103/78	2.8/11.1	411
Land Rover Freelander 2.0 Td4*	4/1951/112	2880	14.7	22.3/16.9	38	26½/30	104	107/75	3.2/11.9	439
Renault Scenic RX4 2.0 16v	4/1998/140	3260	12.8	28.9/20.3	28½	NA	106	102/76 <sup>a</sup>	3.5/10.6	444
Vauxhall Zafira 2.2 16v 5dr	4/2198/145	3270	9.3	21.9/16.4	30	27/23	103	102/75 <sup>1</sup>	3.2/10.9	432
Toyota RAV 4 2.0 3dr	4/1998/147	3350	9.0	23.4/16.0	30	26/16	110	98/73	3.0/10.3	387

\* diesel †all with ABS <sup>a</sup> 109/85 as 4-seater, <sup>1</sup> for middle row

SAFETY <span style="float:right">★★★★○</span>	
<i>A sound, solid set of safety and security features, with full 3-point seatbelts for all three occupants in the back. Only a pair of head restraints, though, and side airbags notable by their absence</i>	
<b>braking</b>	<b>dry road stopping distance</b> <i>from 50mph (with standard ABS)</i>
pedal feel	pedal load
in emergency	unhurried 10kg
handbrake	sudden 18kg
	+4kg ie 22kg
	distance
	38m
	26½m best stop
	28½m ABS on

EURO NCAP CRASH TEST RATINGS
Toyota RAV 4 not yet tested

SECURITY FEATURES	
central locking	✓
remote control	✓
auto window closure	✗
deadlocks	✓
alarm	✓
immobiliser	✓
luggage security	★★★★○
✓ standard	0 factory option ✗ not available

**HANDLING AND STEERING** ★★★★○  
*At-the-wheel appeal little blunted by 5-door's bigger, bulkier body, while firm body control, positive steering and taut, agile road manners feel more manageable than in most mud-pluggers*



**COMFORT** ★★★★○  
*Wider, lofty back seats, bigger side windows and extended roofline give 5-door's cabin a roomier, airier feel. Family-sized RAV 4 feels more settled on the road, too, with plenty of comfort and refinement*

FUEL ECONOMY <span style="float:right">★★★★○</span>	
<i>Full-time four-wheel drive and a tall, blunt body not the recipe for infrequent forecourt visits. RAV 4 fares pretty well, though, proving only a shade thirstier in five-door guise. Good-sized tank, easy filler</i>	
<b>AA test results (mpg)</b>	<b>official figures (mpg)</b>
worst (hard/urban)	19
best (gentle/rural)	38
<b>overall mpg on test</b>	<b>29</b>
realistic tank capacity	50 litres
typical range	320 miles
urban	24.8
extra urban	38.7
<b>combined</b>	<b>32.1</b>
CO <sub>2</sub> emissions	211g/km
car tax band	D