COMPACT AND CAPABLE
STYLE HITS THE STREETS WITH THESE SUVS.

Photographed on location at Eat Street Northshore, Hamilton, Brisbane. eatstreetnorthshore.com.au

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STARTERS MAZDA CX-3 AKARI FWD, SUZUKI IGNIS GL, TOYOTA C-HR KOBA AWD

NEW CAR REVIEW
GOLDEN OLDIE
USED CAR REVIEW

THE ROAD AHEAD AUG/SEP 2017
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CHAMPIONS ARE THERE to be challenged, so when Toyota released its new-to-market C-HR compact SUV, we didn’t hesitate in pitching it against the Mazda CX-3. The CX-3 is, of course, the 2015 and 2016 Australia’s Best Cars awards winner in its category.

A recent update to the CX-3 makes the match-up even more relevant. Changes include G-Vectoring Control on all variants, refinement of driving dynamics and NVH (noise, vibration, harshness) control measures for quieter operation. Smart City Brake Support F/R (forward/reverse) is now standard on all models – a first for any vehicle in the segment, according to Mazda.

The C-HR – which stands for Coupe High Rider – is made in Japan on the Toyota New Global Architecture (TNGA) platform. Standard safety features include pre-collision safety system, active cruise control, autonomous emergency braking and sway warning.

Our test cars were the range-toppers of their respective models – Koba (C-HR) and Akari (CX-3) – the former being all-wheel-drive and the latter front-wheel-drive.

Common to both cars are blind spot monitoring, lane departure warning, rear cross traffic alert, reversing camera, front/rear parking sensors and hill start assist.

But that’s not all. To highlight the diversity and value within the segment, we threw in a wild card – Suzuki’s new Ignis, more specifically, the entry-level GL manual. At just $16,990 driveaway, it’s roughly half the price of the other two. But, is it half the car? Let’s find out…

VALUE FOR MONEY
At $33,490, the Akari FWD is some $2000 less than the C-HR AWD. Add AWD, however, and the prices are line ball. Glass’s Guide forecasts a solid retained value of 54 percent after three years for both cars.

The C-HR is the first of its make to offer five years’ Toyota Service Advantage, which works out about half that of the CX-3 with its shorter servicing intervals. Both come with a three-year warranty, however Mazda’s extends to unlimited kilometres.

Being top-of-the-range, standard equipment is extensive on each. As well as that already listed, tick the boxes for satellite navigation, climate control airconditioning, heated/folding rear vision mirrors and rain-sensing wipers. The Akari gets a few ‘extras’: adaptive LED headlights, powered driver’s seat, sunroof and traffic sign recognition.

DESIGN AND FUNCTION
Over 800km of varied driving, both cars proved eminently comfortable behind the wheel. Each has heated front seats, with the driver’s side also boasting lumbar support. The Mazda’s firmer pew is more than compensated for by having 10-way power adjustment.

It’s advantage C-HR for space, though. By our measurements, the Toyota has more generous rear seating and substantially bigger cargo area: 377 litres to 264 litres.

In terms of practicality, neither has a full-sized spare wheel but rather a space saver, nor a 12-volt power outlet and USB port in the rear. Mazda’s occupants fare better up front, having a power outlet as well as two USB ports and an auxiliary port. The Toyota has only one front USB port and is short of the usual coat hooks and grab handles.

Testers considered the CX-3’s MZD Connect to be more user-friendly and efficient than the CH-R’s Connect Toyota Link system, praising the Mazda’s nice-sized screen, clear resolution, navigateable menus and controller on the console, which makes use on the move easier and safer.

Styling-wise, the CX-3 is smart but conservative compared with the edgy-looking C-HR. Both cars are well-finished and built, inside and out.

QUEENSLAND’S LARGEST CLUB
ON THE ROAD

Under the CH-R’s bonnet is an engine offered by Toyota for the first time in Australia – a 1.2-litre, turbocharged petrol four-cylinder coupled with a seven-step CVT. It’s very different to Mazda’s tried and proven, 2.0-litre normally-aspirated petrol four-cylinder/six-speed auto combination.

The Toyota delivers its peak power lower in the rev range and its torque band is much broader. Even with some 200kg extra to haul, it proved keen and responsive. Despite boasting a power and torque advantage (109kW/192Nm to 85kW/185Nm), the CX-3 felt less so at times, though with just 1400km on the clock at the start of our test, we expect the best is to come once the engine loosens up. The same could be said for fuel consumption – the latter returned 8.0 litres/100km, 1.9 above its ADR combined cycle figure. The C-HR, with 7.2 on premium unleaded, got closer to its ADR of 6.5.

We suspect neither will be called on as frequent tow vehicles, but the CX-3 is rated to pull 640kg (unbraked) and 1200kg (braked), as opposed to 600/600.

Mazda’s updates to the front and rear suspension damping and bushing and the inclusion of G-Vectoring control have further improved what was already a dynamic package. The CX-3 steers and handles as entertainingly as it does competently.

The Toyota is the bigger and heavier car to place on the road, but exhibited plenty of grip and never felt cumbersome.

Each vehicle rides more than agreeably for its segment, though the CX-3 felt better-resolved and compliant over broken back-road surfaces.

1

FAST FACTS
MAZDA CX-3 AKARI FWD

- SAFETY: Six airbags, Smart City Brake Support F/R (forward/reverse).
- CONNECTIVITY: Mazda MZ Connect.
- WEIGHT (KERB MASS): 1294kg
- TYRES: 215/50 R18
- TAILPIPE CO₂ EMISSIONS: 146g/km

2

FAST FACTS
TOYOTA C-HR KOBA AWD

- SAFETY: Seven airbags, pre-collision safety system, autonomous emergency braking.
- CONNECTIVITY: Connect Toyota Link.
- WEIGHT (KERB MASS): 1510kg
- TYRES: 225/50 R18
- TAILPIPE CO₂ EMISSIONS: 148g/km

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The steering, too, is well-weighted and consistent and the CH-R turns in nicely and changes direction fluidly.

Each vehicle rides more than agreeably for their segment, though the CX-3 felt better-resolved and compliant over broken back-road surfaces.

Mazda’s engine mount modification, along with improved body acoustic sealing and sound insulation, have worked in reducing NVH levels. No complaints about the CH-R’s powertrain, either. It’s quiet and smooth, particularly for a CVT. Unfortunately, the same can’t be said for road noise, which intrudes over coarse chip surfaces.

**SUZUKI IGNIS GL**

Built on an all-new platform, the Ignis is available in two specifications: GL with five-speed manual (as tested) or CVT ($1000 extra) and better-specified GLX (CVT only).

The price is right, but depreciation can be savage. Glass’s Guide gives a three-year retained value of just 44 percent.

Capped price servicing – due every six months/10,000km – averages out at $239 over two years/40,000km, while insurance amounts to $620.46 per annum. Warranty is the same as Toyota: three yr/100,000km.

For an entry level car with such a sharp price, the GL comes stacked. Standard equipment includes seven-inch touch-screen infotainment system, Bluetooth, smartphone access for Apple CarPlay, Android Auto and MirrorLink, integrated navigation, reversing camera and airconditioning.

**FAST FACTS**

**SUZUKI IGNIS GL**

- SAFETY: Six airbags, anti-lock brakes, electronic stability control.
- CONNECTIVITY: Multilink media with Apple CarPlay.
- WEIGHT (KERB MASS): 830kg
- TYRES: 175/65 R16
- TAILPIPE CO₂ EMISSIONS: 107g/km

Suzuki.
DESIGN AND FUNCTION
At the time of writing, the Ignis had yet to be crash tested by ANCAP. CO₂ emissions are a lowly 107g/km.

In keeping with its keen pricing, the front seats – while reasonably comfortable – lack the degree of support and bolstering of the Mazda and Toyota.

There’s a surprising amount of space. By our measurements, the Ignis offers the best front headroom and matched the C-HR for rear head and leg room. Cargo space is better than that of the CX-3.

The ‘infotainment’ is easy to use and the controls and instruments simply, but logically, laid out, although there’s no steering reach adjustment. Suzuki is now big on personalisation and a range of trim additions are available.

ON THE ROAD
The 1.2-litre non-turbo engine produces 66kW of power at 6000rpm and 120Nm of torque at 4400rpm, but with just 830kg kerb mass to haul, power and torque-to-weight ratios are not far behind the CX-3 and better than the C-HR.

You need to work the gears, but therein lies much of the fun. The Ignis averaged close to its ADR figure of 4.7 litres/100km with 5.3 litres on test.

It handles more competently than might be expected of a city runabout and is pleasantly nimble. The steering is light but consistent, though could do with more feel at speed. Grip levels from the skinny tyres are meagre and body roll prevalent, but only after the car has been pushed beyond its comfort zone.

The ride is generally compliant, even on back roads. The brakes – front discs and rear drums – lack initial bite, but held up without complaint over our searching two-day test.

CONCLUSION
The CX-3’s recent update has made a very good car even better. We feel it has the CH-R covered – albeit slightly in some areas – and it’s easy to see why, in May, the CX-3 topped Australia’s small SUV segment with 1542 sales.

For a completely new model, the Toyota impresses in most things with no major foible. It would be an easy vehicle to live with and uses space way better than the Mazda. No surprise if it also soars up the sales charts.

The Ignis shows that there’s great buying at the other end of the price scale, too. This is an affordable first car or inner-city runabout and is big on room and fun. And one not out of its depth in the great outdoors.

COSTS + SAFETY RATINGS

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^ PRICES ARE MANUFACTURERS’ LIST PRICES UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED AND DO NOT INCLUDE STATUTORY AND DELIVERY CHARGES. PRICES CORRECT AT TIME OF PRINTING.

^^ BASED ON AN RACQ INSURANCE COMPREHENSIVE POLICY FOR A 35 YEAR-OLD MALE, MAXIMUM NO CLAIM BONUS, VEHICLE FINANCIALLY UNENCUMBERED, AND $650 EXCESS. MULTI POLICY AND RACQ MEMBER LOYALTY DISCOUNTS MAY APPLY. DISCOUNTS OF 2.5-15 PERCENT MAY BE AVAILABLE TO RACQ MEMBERS DEPENDING ON LENGTH OF MEMBERSHIP.