**2021 Tata Safari Review**

The *Tata Safari* has been launched in India at a price of between Rs. 14.69 - 21.45 lakhs (ex-showroom, Delhi).

Since the Tata Harrier has already been reviewed by Team-BHP, this report will only focus on changes made to the Safari. To read the full test-drive, [click here](https://www.team-bhp.com/forum/official-new-car-revews/209281-tata-harrier-official-review.html).

Say hello to a slightly longer Harrier variant with a 3rd-row of seats, that Tata has smartly named the Safari. Originally called the Gravitas, we feel that Tata developed cold feet about its prospects and at the nth hour, pasted the iconic Safari badge on it. It's a move we will agree with. After all, brand "Safari" has instant recognition in India, what with its legacy of 25 years. Plus, Tata doesn't have any other big SUV launching soon, so why not use a brand asset that is ready and available? Purists will of course cry about using that iconic nameplate on an extended Harrier, but the truth is, purist ideologies don't sell cars! Changing the name from Gravitas -> Safari just gave this car 20 times the views it would've otherwise gotten.

This is a good time for Tata to bring back the Safari. With the demise of the Hexa (bookies are taking big bets on whether it will return or not ), the company did not have a 6 or 7-seater premium UV in its portfolio. The 2021 Safari uses the same Land Rover D8-derived architecture and Impact 2.0 design language as the Harrier. Of course, there are some changes that have been made to accommodate the extra row of seats, while a few design cues from the old Safari have been incorporated into the new car to bring some Safari'ness to the design.

However, unlike the old Safari, the new car comes only in a front-wheel drive configuration. No AWD means tourers cum explorers will need to look elsewhere. The Safari will be sold in 6 or 7-seater configurations with all forward-facing seats.

Tata Safari Exterior Review

The Harrier-Safari look drop dead handsome! Front end features a radiator grille with reworked detailing and chrome inserts, along with revised housings for the headlamp clusters:

Smart & tight rear gets a more upright tail-gate, redesigned tail-lamps and a new bumper. The Team-BHP sticker reminds me that Tata should now get this car GNCAP tested, considering its focus on safety and that cheaper Tatas already have 4 - 5 star ratings!

Viewed from the side, the Safari comes across as a well-balanced design. Chrome is used on the door handles, on the window line and on the roof rails. 18" rims improve its stance, compared to the Harrier:

The Safari measures 4,661 mm in length, 1,894 mm in width and 1,786 mm in height. This makes it 63 mm longer & 80 mm taller than the Harrier. At 2,741 mm, the wheelbase remains the same:

View it from any angle and you will agree that the 2021 Tata Safari is a fab looking SUV. Flared wheel arches and black cladding on the sides give it a butch look:

Headlamp clusters are identical in design and function to the Harrier. However, their housings are grey instead of black, and get thick chrome inserts. We don't like all this excessive chrome at the front - it looks like the Harrier put on some jewellery for a big fat Indian wedding!

Radiator grille is identical in design to the Harrier's. However, the detailing is different with a tri-arrow theme. While the design is attractive, the use of chrome is again, too much:

Front bumper is lifted from the 2019 Harrier. It gets a split air dam with vertical slats at the top and a honeycomb mesh grille at the bottom. Silver plastic skid plate is obviously fake & this SUV is no offroader:

Machined alloy wheels have the same smart design as the 2020 Harrier. However, at 18 inches, they are bigger in size. While the tyre width is unchanged at 235 mm, the sidewall is ~12 mm shorter and thus, the ride is a bit firmer than the Harrier's. We don't agree with this larger rim size as the only benefit is looks, but the disadvantages are many (wheels more prone to damage, potholes are felt more, pricier tyre replacements). Lower variants get 16" steel wheels with 235/70 section tyres which will offer superior ride comfort and is a more practical size for India:

Silver roof rails get a stepped design to bring some love from the old Safari. Their chrome inserts make the design look too busy. Tata usually has a classy approach with these things, yet they've really gone overboard with the blingy chrome. While all variants get roof rails, only those without a sunroof get functional ones that can bear a load of 130 kilos:

Chrome insert has Safari branding which looks cheesy & after-market'ish IMHO:

Rear quarter glass is taller to let more light into the third row area. D-Pillars have funky silver panels that merge with the roof rails:

Like we've seen in many recent Tata cars, there are more plastic panels used than we'd like in certain areas. Here's an extra body-coloured plastic panel on the D-Pillar:

Panoramic sunroof is available in the XT+, XZ+ and XZA+ variants. This feature won many fans for the Hector & we're certain it will help the Safari's cause too:

A glance at the roof from the rear. Shiny black sharkfin antenna sits towards the end:

Tailgate is more upright, giving it a tall appearance like the old Safari. Use of chrome has been restricted to the "T" badge and prominent "Safari" lettering low on the tailgate. We love this lettering!

Like some other Tata cars, the rear windshield gets animal-themed detailing. Here's a lion family:

LED tail-lamps have been tweaked. They have more edges than the Harrier's:

Rear bumper houses two redesigned foglamps and has a silver insert. Like we've seen in the Harrier, the Safari gets fake exhaust vents on both sides. Only two reverse parking sensors have been provided. We feel that a tailgate-mounted spare wheel should definitely have been provided on the '21 Safari. Would've added to that butch look and been an awesome differentiator from the Harrier. If the EcoSport can do it, why not the Safari?

Apart from the Royale Blue shade, the Safari is available in two more colours - Daytona Grey and Orcus White. It's a design that will look good in any colour. Hence, we are disappointed that Tata is offering merely 3 options to customers:

Tata Safari Interior Review

While the design of the dashboard remains the same as the Harrier, the colour theme has changed. It is now black on the top with ashwood and oyster white. Looks real classy:

Same instrument cluster, but with minor changes to accommodate some of the new features that the Safari gets:

The Safari comes with an electronic parking brake and "auto-hold" (see icon). Auto-hold makes city driving convenient. When engaged, the car holds itself in place at traffic lights etc. The driver doesn't need to keep the AT's brake pedal continuously pressed:

A useful TPMS has been provided. Shows the temperature as well:

Door ajar warning displays a Safari with a sunroof! Nice. But it does not warn you if the sunroof is left open after you switch off the engine:

Doorpads are also finished in black and oyster white. The white portion is large and will get dirty easily. All the best to you for cleaning it (frequently). Even the bottom area - which your shoes will frequently soil - is light coloured!!

Seats are draped in Benecke-Kaliko oyster white perforated leather upholstery. The white colour scheme makes the Safari's interiors feel airy, but again, these will get stained very easily. Quite an impractical colour choice by Tata:

The Safari comes with a "boss mode" lever, wherein the passenger sitting in the second row can push this lever down and move the front passenger seat all the way ahead, giving himself acres of knee room:

Zooming in on the perforated leather upholstery. The upholstery is well stitched and material quality is satisfactory:

As is usually the case with triple row SUVs, the driver's rearward view is poor. The windshield is small, the D-pillars are thick & the rear quarter-glasses hardly make any difference to visibility. Better to rely on the reversing camera + parking sensors:

Except for the new colour scheme and some feature additions to the head-unit, the center fascia remains unchanged:

8.8-inch touchscreen gets iRA (Intelligent Real time Assist) connected technology. The iRA App offers remote commands, vehicle security, location-based services, gamification and live vehicle diagnostics:

The iRA app lets you remotely lock / unlock the car, operate the headlights + horn and check the DTE. It also gives you a diagnostic report with critical alerts and a list of Tata Motors service stations in the area:

Other functions include find my car, stolen vehicle tracking, remote immobilisation, emergency SMS, geo fencing, time fencing alert, valet mode, roadside assistance, share location, social tribes, trip details and driving score:

Center console loses the aircraft-like handbrake which looked great, but felt cheap and was not very intuitive in operation:

The Safari now comes with an electronic parking brake and auto-hold. Both are premium car features:

An additional fast charging USB port has been provided in the storage bin (under the driver armrest):

Panoramic sunroof functions just like the Harrier's. It lets in a lot of light and has anti-pinch & automatic rain-sensing closure features. It also gets a "Global Close" feature in which it shuts automatically when the ignition is turned off and the vehicle is parked with the doors locked. Look at the end and you'll see that Tata has thoughtfully provided a cabin lamp for 3rd-row occupants:

The rear doors of the Safari open and close in a triple-stage action. They swing out sufficiently wide:

A look at the rear doorpad finished in black and white:

All variants get a bench seat in the second row. The XZ+ and XZA+ variants are available with "optional" captain seats which are extremely comfortable, offering excellent all-round support. Good call by Tata in making the captain seats optional, as some families might prefer the bench in the top variant (adds space for 1 adult). You will remember that the Innova Crysta ZX was launched without a bench seat variant:

Individual armrests are comfortable, but way too slim. Tata should've made them wider. They can be folded upwards:

Legroom is generous. Scooped out seatbacks of the front seats help matters further:

As mentioned earlier, the Safari comes with a "Boss mode", wherein the rear passenger can push the front seat ahead. Just look at the amount of legroom available in "Boss" mode:

Both captain seats come with child seat anchor points:

Fore & aft and seatback angle adjustments have been provided:

Unlike the bench seat variant, these captain seats cannot be tumbled forward. While you can move them and tilt their backrests forward...

...there is hardly any space on the sides to get into the third row. In the captain seat version, 3rd-row access is best left to kids & very fit adults. It's impossible for anyone else. If you intend to use the 3rd-row frequently, we recommend picking the bench-seat variant:

Another option = one can squeeze between the captain seats to reach the last row:

On the other hand, access to the last row is easier in the bench seat variant, whose seat tumbles forward:

2021 Tata Safari Review-20210207-13.48.38.jpg

Third row seats are split in a 50:50 ratio. They are on the thinner side and offer less support than the other seats of the car. That said, cushioning is good by 'third row standards' and they get soft & adjustable headrests too. The seatback angle is comfortable, but it's not adjustable:

3-point seatbelts even for last row occupants, with a slot to park them (see middle) when not being used:

Knee room is decent by third row standards & you can increase it by requesting the 2nd-row occupants to move their seats a bit ahead. Scooped out seatbacks of the captain seats frees a little more space. Tip = you can stretch out one leg between the captain seats!

Even a tall occupant will have adequate legroom & just about enough headroom (tell the driver to watch out for unmarked speed breakers!!). However, the floor is higher than the other two rows. This means most passengers will sit in a knees up position. Here are some figures we can hand out. Headroom = 889 mm, legroom = 832 mm, thigh support = 463 mm, floor to seat cushion height = 315 mm, backrest angle = 23 degrees:

With the middle row seat pushed all the way ahead, I have about 2 inches of knee room. With the seat pushed all the way behind, my knees touch the seatback:

Glass area is smaller than we would like, but the light coloured interiors and overall size of the cabin ensures that third row occupants don't get claustrophobic:

The Safari gets a dedicated air-con unit for the third row. Vents are placed on the C-pillar. Cooling is very effective:

Blower speed can be controlled via this rotary knob. Useful cupholders have been provided on both sides:

A pair of fast charging USB ports is provided on the left:

Both sides get a storage spot with a net to keep smartphones and other small items:

Laughable 73 liters of boot space with the third row seats up. At the most, you can only store a couple of small bags in it. Thus, with 7 people onboard, the Safari can best be used within the city, or just for daytrips out of town. If you want to explore storage options on the roof, choose the variants without a sunroof as they get functional roof rails with a load rating of 130 kilos:

Seatbacks can be folded down almost flat by pulling on the straps:

With the seatbacks folded forward, you get 750 liters of cargo room. In case of the 7-seater, boot space can be expanded further by tumbling the bench seats forward to 1,658 liters:

Tata Safari 2.0L Diesel AT Review

Fiat-sourced 1,956cc diesel produces 168 BHP & 350 Nm. Engine cover gets Kryotec170 branding:

The Safari is powered by the same 2.0L diesel engine as the Harrier, Compass & Hector. Called "Kryotec170", the motor produces 168 BHP (@ 3,750 rpm) & 350 Nm (@ 1,750 - 2,500 rpm) and is mated to a 6-speed MT or AT. One line summary = the AT is the gearbox to buy, don't even consider the MT.

The Safari is larger and as a result, heavier than the Harrier by 115 kg. It tips the scales at 1,825 kg. This gives it a power-to-weight ratio of 92 BHP / ton, which is just 6 BHP / ton lesser than the Harrier. The torque-to-weight ratio of 192 Nm / ton is lesser than the Harrier's by 14 Nm / ton. Compared to its rivals, the Safari falls behind the 100 BHP / ton and 208 Nm / ton of the Hector Plus.

The automatic gearbox has been sourced from Hyundai and is very smooth & competent (like Hyundai ATs, it's not the fastest though). Get this = the engine and AT mating is superior to that of the Jeep Compass! Just like Maruti did a better job of tuning the 1.3L MJD engine in the Swift, Tata has done a better job with the 2.0 Diesel AT than FCA itself.

Tata has put in effort to reduce the NVH levels & it shows. On start up, the body shake we experienced in the 2020 Harrier has almost disappeared. The AT is superbly tuned and enjoys a good partnership with the Kryotec170. This smooth-shifting AT makes the Safari easy to drive in the city. Lift off the brake pedal and the Safari will start crawling forward instantly. The SUV moves off seamlessly from a standstill & there is no lag to speak of. Light accelerator input is all you'll need to commute. The accelerator pedal is also feather-light, which just makes this AT that much nicer to drive. With an easy right foot, the gearbox shifts up early and shift quality is very smooth.

We will say that the AT's overall response time is "average" to "above average", as is usually the case with Hyundai torque-converters. It's not the fastest out there or the most responsive to kickdown commands and there are a few situations where you'll feel it takes longer to downshift than you'd like. That being said, the AT does a good job 98% of the time. The focus of Hyundai & Tata has clearly been on smoothness because even when it drops a gear in full kickdown mode, there's no jerk. It's polished.

On the open road, the 168 horses & 350 Nm give the Safari AT enough muscle to please even enthusiastic drivers. Fast drivers won't be left wanting on long expressways. The acceleration is quick enough and there is sufficient punch on tap at all times. This SUV is a capable cruiser that munches miles comfortably, seeing 100 km/h @ a relaxed 1,700 rpm and 120 km/h @ 2,200 rpm. Overtaking slower moving traffic is an effortless experience too & the Safari AT is a brilliant long-distance companion.

The Safari gets two selectable driving modes (apart from the default "City" mode). Because of the powerful engine, "Eco" mode is genuinely usable. It is not weak or poor at all, and we see owners using it in the city as well as for easy expressway cruising. Added benefit = because of duller responses, the drive experience is smoothest in Eco. "City" mode is a good balance between the two, but "Sport" mode is the one you want when you're in the mood for some fun / driving fast. The difference in Sport is immediately felt. There is more power available, and the accelerator itself feels so much more responsive. Sport mode keeps the engine hot by maintaining higher revs, thereby making the motor + gearbox more eager.

Shifting to manual mode automatically engages "Sport" driving mode, although very honestly, manual shifting is pointless in a gargantuan SUV like this. Even when driving aggressively, we found ourselves simply engaging "Sport" and letting the AT do all the work. We foresee owners using "manual mode" very rarely, if at all. It's also tuned conservatively (typical of Hyundai) and doesn't allow aggressive downshifts (like say, the Endeavour). Uniquely, if the gearbox disagrees with your downshift command, a prompt comes up on the MID telling you that your command has been denied. It's nice to see this sort of communication from the car - it's rare.

There are some niggles as well. During our test drive, the service warning light appeared in the instrument cluster and none of the drive modes or terrain response modes could be engaged, even when we moved the gear shifter to the manual mode position. Such a problem was also seen in an earlier Harrier media car that we had. It was sorted by turning the engine off and firing it up again. While it happened just once this time (compared to multiple times in the Harrier), Tata has to make sure it's sorted out once and for all. Very disheartening to see niggles & issues even after the model has been on sale for 2 years now. If we spotted such a problem in just a day of being with the car, imagine how many more owners might see when living with the car.

What I would like to see in the Safari is an all-wheel drive system. Tata Motors has said that such a version would be introduced only if there is sufficient demand for it. We think that's just a polite way of saying "no". Sad, because an AWD AT will make the Safari a kick-ass tourer, while also bestowing it with more marketing cred.

NVH levels have improved compared to the 2020 Harrier we drove last. There is a negligible amount of body shake on start up & none on shutdown. The AT shifts up early, hence engine sound isn't a bother when you're driving calmly in the city. Engine noise is not as prominent as the 2020 Harrier, even when the needle starts climbing. The diesel is sufficiently quiet at lower revvs. Only once it gets past 3,750 rpm does it get loud. Still, it's not as annoying as it was in the last Harrier we drove. Once past 4,000 rpm, the engine note is sad (even by diesel standards). We feel this is an "engine" problem as much as it is an "insulation" problem because the Compass gets noisy at high revs too. While road noise is average, we noticed a bit of wind noise filtering through at 90 km/h, which increases with speed. That said, it was not excessive even at 120 km/h.

Tata Safari Ride & Handling Review

The Safari is equipped with an independent McPherson strut front suspension with coil springs and an anti-roll bar, while the rear is a semi-independent twist blade design with a panhard rod. While the front is very similar to the Land Rover Discovery Sport, the rear suspension has been tuned by Lotus Engineering, UK. The Safari's ride quality is mature, but has a firm edge to it. At city speeds, it is compliant enough and the Safari's occupants will be kept comfortable. No owner will complain. Still, it's not what we would call "plush" & there is simply no comparison with cars like the Duster & Hexa. The sharpness of potholes is obvious inside & you'll feel the suspension's firmness on bad roads (with some side-to-side movement of the cabin too). Those seated in the third row will feel this more than the others. This isn’t a car that can flatten bad roads like a Duster / Hexa. In fact, the ride is a bit firmer than the Harrier's as well due to the shorter tyre sidewalls (Harrier runs on R17 rims). Our test vehicle had 18" wheels, and lesser variants get 16" rims with taller rubber. The ride quality on the 16" wheel variant will be noticeably cushier.

On the highway too, the Safari's ride quality is compliant & adequate. Yet again, it's not going to round off bumps like the Hexa could and you will always be aware of the kind of road you are driving on. What's nice is that the suspension goes about its job silently - it's not clunky or loud.

Straight line stability is very good, even at high speeds. Additionally, the Safari isn't bouncy at speed and the rear end recovers quite quickly from expressway up / down undulations. Grip levels are satisfactory from the chassis & 235 mm tyres, yet this big & heavy SUV isn't what we’d call a corner carver. Body roll is present and you feel the car’s height + weight. All of this is fine and the behaviour is acceptable as long as you drive it like a 7-seater family tourer.

On the highway, the steering is not as sensitive or twitchy as it was in the '19 Harrier we drove. It's just like the improved 2020 Harrier in that respect. That said, I have to state that it's still a level too sensitive at high speeds. Even a slight touch on the steering results in the car changing direction. Tata should dull the high-speed response even more. I wouldn't have a problem with such a steering in a hatchback or low-slung sedan, but in a large + tall + heavy SUV like this, it can make things unnerving at 120 km/h. Even so, the steering's behaviour is no deal breaker and I could take the expressway curves a lot more confidently than in the '19 Harrier.

What will truly bother owners on a daily basis is the steering's weight at parking, crawling and u-turn speeds (0 - 5 km/h). It feels hefty <5 km/h and will totally put off regular folk (especially women) who are used to light Japanese & Korean steerings. No problem once you get above 10 km/h or so. My single wish from Tata Motors is to make the steering lighter at parking / crawling speeds. I don't understand why something as simple as tuning a power steering isn't done perfectly after 2 years of the car (Harrier) being on sale.

In addition to the switchable engine remaps mentioned in the engine post, the Safari gets a Land Rover-esque terrain response system with two selectable modes (apart from the normal driving mode). Wet Mode is designed for driving in the rain by providing better traction and handling. If you should hit a rough patch on your holiday outings, Tata has you covered there too, with the Rough Road Mode which optimizes the vehicle's behavior on broken roads. Braking performance is also tuned to support rough road surfaces. This is all software trickery that can work well. We didn't get an opportunity to test either of these and their verdict will depend on the most reliable reports of them all = Team-BHP Ownership Reviews.

The laden ground clearance is 143 mm, which is 10 mm lesser than the Harrier's 153 mm.

The Safari's turning radius of 5.8 meters is big. In fact, the turning radius is on par with the huge Toyota Fortuner's!! Expect more 3-point turns than necessary in the city. Within urban confines, the Safari isn't as easy to drive as the Creta or Compass due to its size, steering weight & ergonomics (for many drivers).

ABS & EBD, ESP, hill hold, brake disc wiping, brake pre-fill, hydraulic brake fade compensation, rollover mitigation, traction control and cornering stability control are standard on all variants of the Safari, while the top XZ variant further gets hill descent control. The Safari has disc brakes at the front and rear. We jammed the brakes at high speed too and the car stopped straight & true, with no drama. The ABS doesn't kick in unless really necessary (we like it this way). Please note that the bite from the brake pedal is sharp and will take some getting used to when you are new to the car. There is a good deal of pedal travel before the brakes bite & the pedal feels a bit spongy as well. Lastly, the softer front means there is nose dive under braking (and nose rise under acceleration!!).