Kia Driving Day, notably including the latest Picanto – First Impressions

Published: September 8, 2017

Author: Kim Henson

Online version: https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/kia-driving-day-notably-including-the-latest-picanto-first-impressions/



New and classic Kias… Picanto on the left and Pride on the right.

Driving Kia's latest Picanto (and other models).

Kim Henson reports… (with all photographs by Kim).

Arriving in Britain in 1991, Kia, part of the south Korean Hyundai Group, has been posting

increasingly good sales figures here. Indeed the UK represents Kia's largest market in Europe, and the fourth largest in the World after South Korea, China and the United States.

More than a quarter of a century ago, I test-drove a Kia Pride for a week (for 'Car Mechanics' magazine) and rated it as a competent small car of its time.

Recently I attended a multi-model Kia driving day event, where I briefly sampled several examples of current models from the firm's line up. Alas, although a Pride was there (and still looking great) it was not available for test driving on the day.

Therefore, my first – and longest – drive of the day was in the firm's latest Picanto, a car primarily intended for city use and the second-best seller in their range, behind the Sportage SUV. Third best-selling Kias are the cee'd mid-sized hatchbacks and estates, then comes the new Rio 'supermini' hatchbacks. Other Kias on offer to UK buyers are the Soul Crossover/MPV, Venga MPV, Carens large MPV, Optima saloon and SW estates, plus the Sorento large seven-seater SUV, and the Stonic compact B-segment SUV.

Further fascinating new models are on the horizon too…

Latest Picanto



The latest, third generation Picanto is available only in five door form (due to lack of demand for three door models), and with prices starting from £9,450. The latest Picanto is an all-new model, with a completely new platform and a stiffer bodyshell than its predecessor.

It is claimed that the new Picanto is more spacious, more practical and more refined, also better equipped and with improved handling and ride comfort, compared with the previous model. It incorporates up-to-the-minute connectivity and driver assistance features too.



Nine versions are available, with a choice of two multi-point injection petrol engines, two transmissions and five trim levels. These are designated ‘1’, ‘2’, ‘3’, plus new ‘GT-Line’ and ‘GT-Line S’.

The current normally-aspirated engines are a 1.0 litre 66 bhp three cylinder unit, mated to a five speed manual gearbox, and a 1.25 litre, four cylinder 83 bhp motor with a choice between five speed manual and four speed automatic transmission.

These provide fuel consumption of up to 64.2 mpg and CO2 emissions down to as low as 101 g/km. On the horizon is a turbocharged direct injection T-GDI version of the 1.0 litre engine, developing 99 bhp plus significantly more torque – with 172 Nm (127 lb.ft) produced from just 1,500 rpm.

Overall the latest Picanto is very similar in size to its predecessor, but in order to provide greater interior space and a larger boot capacity, the wheelbase has been increased to 2,400 mm (7.87 ft). As a result, the boot capacity has grown from 200 litres (7.06 cu.ft) to a class-leading 255 litres (9.00 cu.ft), and this improves to 1,010 litres (35.67 cu.ft) with the rear seats folded down. In addition the longer wheelbase is said to improve handling and gives a slightly more accommodating ride quality

The version I drove was the 1.0 litre 66 bhp three cylinder normally aspirated petrol engine, and in grade ‘2’ guise – this will probably be the best selling version, with an on-the-road price of £10,750.



Low running costs are an obvious attraction of the Picantos. For the version I sampled, plus points are the official Combined Cycle fuel consumption figure of 64.2 mpg (so expect around 50 mpg in real life) and low CO2 emissions of 101 g/km, plus a low (Group 5) insurance rating. The road tax currently costs £140 each year (and company car drivers who might opt for this model will pay 19% Benefit-in-Kind tax).

For many buyers the peace-of-mind of a comprehensive seven years/100,000 mile warranty is very important too.

Specification levels for this '2' grade version are quite wide-ranging, and include electric front and rear windows, electrically adjustable door mirrors, power steering, stability control, central locking, 14-inch alloy wheels, air-conditioning, AM/FM radio, also front and side airbags.

On entering the car I liked the generous head and leg room provided for front seat occupants, and head room was also good for rear seat passengers, although leg room for them was limited with the front seats set towards the rearmost reaches of their travel.

This slideshow requires JavaScript.

The four passenger doors all open wide, aiding entry to, and exit from the vehicle.

I took a good look in the boot too, and it is clearly larger than found in many other 'city' cars.

Oddments stowage inside the vehicle was good too, with (for example) long bins plus bottle holders, in each of the front doors.

During my test drive I found that the car was eager to perform if the engine was kept spinning at higher rpm; with maximum torque of just 96 Nm (70.80 lb.ft) developed at a high speed of 3,500 rpm, it was often necessary to change down a gear or two when climbing steep hills, and when accelerating hard.

Having said that, the car cruised well, and reasonably quietly, at higher road speeds, and at 60 mph in fifth (top) gear, the tacho needle was indicating 2,900 rpm.

For the record, this model is ultimately capable of 100 mph, and acceleration from rest to 60 mph takes 13.8 seconds.

Responsive steering, predictable handling and a smooth ride were all evident during my drive, and the car is easy to manoeuvre in town driving and parking.

I tried the stereo system, and was impressed by the quality of the sound produced.

VERDICT

A likeable compact car, which should prove to be inexpensive to operate.



Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

Kia Picanto ‘2’, 1.0 manual 5-Door.

Price: £10,750.

Engine/transmission: 1.0 litre, three cylinder, naturally-aspirated petrol engine, 66 bhp, 96 Nm (71 lb.ft) of torque from 3,500 rpm, five speed manual gearbox.

Performance: 100 mph, 0–60mph 13.8 seconds.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 64.2 mpg (around 50 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 101 g/km, VED road tax £140, BiK company car tax 19%.

Insurance Group: 5.

Warranty: Seven years/100,000 miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 3,595 mm 11.79 ft), W 1,595 mm (5.23 ft), H 1,485 mm (4.87 ft), boot/load space 255 to 1,484 litres (9.00 to 35.67 cu.ft). Five doors; four/five seats.

Briefer drives...

Soul



My next outing was in a Soul 1.6 T-GDi ‘Sport’, with a 1.6 litre turbocharged petrol engine, developing 201 bhp and 265 Nm (195 lb.ft) of torque all the way from 1,500 to 4,500 rpm, and driving through a seven speed transmission.

With its spacious, practical, now familiar but still-distinctive bodywork, this Soul is pepped up by its turbocharged engine, with especially rapid performance from 3,000 rpm upwards.

Power is delivered effortlessly, and acceleration from rest and on the move is impressive.

Potential top speed is 122 mph, and with a nought to 60 mph acceleration time of just 7.5 seconds.

So this car is fun to drive but also retains everyday practicality, with plenty of head and leg

room throughout, plus a large and sensibly-shaped luggage compartment.

The official Combined fuel consumption figure is 40.9 mpg (so in real life motoring expect around 35 mpg).

The price? £23,565 ‘on the road’.



c'eed



I next sampled the sporty c'eed Turbo GT-Line, with a three cylinder, 1.0 litre turbocharged petrol engine, developing 118 bhp, and – importantly – 171 Nm (126 lb.ft) of torque, all the way from 1,500 to 4,000 rpm. This unit is mated to a six speed manual gearbox.

Highly impressive in terms of driving enjoyment, this c'eed produced strong acceleration and good pulling power from low rpm too, so the car was docile in urban traffic as well as a fast-mover on the open road.

Roadholding and handling characteristics were good, and I felt that the ride was comfortable too. The spacious interior and roomy boot were also appreciated.

Fuel consumption promises to be frugal, with the official Combined figure of 57.6 mpg translating into more like 50 mpg or so in daily use.

For the record, the top speed is quoted as 118 mph, with zero to 60 mph taking 10.7 seconds.

How much? £20,580 ‘on the road’.



Optima



Last but not least, I had a very short drive in the plug-in hybrid version of the Optima, powered by a 2.0 litre petrol engine (developing 154 bhp) and an electric motor, giving a combined output of 202 bhp, and with a range on electric power only of up to 33 miles (in my opinion, not enough…).

This well-equipped, comfortable machine performed very well during my test drive, with the electric powertrain and petrol engine working seamlessly together, and in conjunction with each other, depending on the driving conditions prevailing.

Potential top speed on this model is 119 mph, with 0 to 60 mph acceleration taking 9.1 seconds.

More importantly for most people, the theoretical official Combined fuel consumption figure

is 176.6 mpg, although real life motoring would almost certainly see considerably higher consumption, depending also on the use of the vehicle and enthusiasm of the driver.

Price? £33,995 ‘on the road’.

