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Kia Picanto 1.0 GT-Line – Road Test

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Robin Roberts (and WheelsWithinWales) writes:



If you can remember when cars were actually fun to drive you'll enjoy the latest Kia Picanto even more with the high specification now added to this anything but basic runabout.

We briefly drove the latest baby car from the Korean family in the summer and that was an entry-level model, but we've just managed to get our hands on the higher specified GT-Line, and it made a big impression for a small car.

While Kia rolls out some of the latest pure electric models it has wisely not forgotten that in today's challenging times there are still a lot of drivers who want a more affordable alternative new car rather than risk running an older second hand model.

Kia is staying faithful to the city car sector with the arrival of the latest Picanto and it's going to prove how wrong are rivals who have leapt into the larger mid-size and cross over categories.

Competitors have left a huge gap to be filled by the petrol Picanto line up and it should be a wise choice for a lot of motorists.

It's not only compact but very capable and comes with a suite of sophisticated features in the GT-Line variant we evaluated for owners who have to watch how they spend money and get value for money.

The new range starts from £15,595 with a simple four-tier line-up: '2', 'GT-Line', '3' and 'GT-Line S', two petrol engines and a choice of transmissions.

Picanto sales accounted for more than one-in-five A-class UK registrations last year as its sales climbed over 35% in 12 months and now it has been given a significant facelift both outside and inside.

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There's a range of advanced technologies and inside Picanto offers Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, an 8-inch touchscreen navigation and multiple USB charging ports, all of which are standard on every variant of the new Picanto and it has a suite of features to please the safety testers at Euro NCAP.

Under the small bonnet you have 1.0 3-cyl or 1.2 4-cyl petrol engines with lower emissions than the previous versions and five-speed manual or automated gearboxes.

In the UK, the 1.0-litre engine is available on the '2', 'GT-Line' and '3' grade variants while the 1.2-litre engine is available exclusively on 'GT-Line S' models with the top model costing £19,145.

Our busy sounding 1.0 litre engine whizzed up to mid-range very quickly and then settled down to a constant chatter at motorway speed while delivering about 57 mpg overall.



The five-speed gearchange was light, fairly precise and came with a longer than expected clutch travel to ease selection. Brakes underfoot were good with a nice progressive feel as assistance increased while the power steering made truly effortless work of town parking without being twitchy on more open roads.

The conventional handbrake had a good range and held it well on hills while the lights and wipers' stalk switches were clear, convenient and worked well. The wheel-spokes covered the infotainment choices as well as the on-board computer displays for the car's essentials.

Infront of the driver, the big main gauges were clear, simple and split by the selectable



display for other settings from a menu or folders on the wheelspokes.

Central in the dashboard was a big screen for infotainment including map and navigation, entertainment, mobile phone and suchlike including the car's "handbook".

Below this were two well marked simple rotary dials for heating and ventilation, output and rear window heater switch, which were clear, concise and worked extremely well. No fiddling with touchscreen or sliders to distract a driver.



Oddments room was a little disappointing but it's a small car after all and short door bins were matched to a few trays on the central console, a little bin between the front seats and a slender glovebox, while those behind had small bins and seat pockets to hold items, or a



thin parcel shelf.

The bootspace would take a couple of shopping bags or possibly two weekend bags but that was about it until you dropped the 70:30 offset split seat backs. Access to the boot was good with knee-high floor, and back seat occupants could ease into their places with a little bit of wiggling compared to the easier way for driver or front passenger.

Infront, leg and headroom was very good, but it was a case of shorter legs preferred behind, ideally for two passengers but a third might squeeze in.

Seats' shaping was figure forming and supportive infront, less behind but cushions soaked up a few bumps which sneaked past the suspension on bumpy bits of road.

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Let's not pretend the Picanto is a sports hatch despite its GT moniker, as it does not pack a punch or handle like a skate board but it was entirely predictable, nicely balanced towards understeer and safely pulled back on line.

Ride quality was generally good if a little bumpy on some roads and you could hear the suspension coping.

Acceleration was modest and improved when the engine was encouraged through the first three gears but it tailed off moving into fourth and positively paraded along in fifth.

We never saw fuel consumption head south of 50 mpg and it even nudged 60 mpg on some trips but averaged out at 57 mpg overall. With a small tank its overall range was really suited to commuting.



VERDICT

What is hard to convey is the sheer fun of being behind the wheel of the Picanto GT-Line. It was eager to get going, was effortless to push along and had enough sophisticated features to keep most content.

Long distances were eased by the standard cruise control but it's not an intelligent sensing system which kept the car distant from traffic in front.

Still you can't have everything and its fun factor is something which is rarely found today in a small car, in fact it's rare to find a small car anyway so we reckon Kia is going to continue its winning ways and meet customers' desires very well.

For: Lively, agile, smooth powertrain, economical, easy handling, comfortable, excellent warranty.

Against: Tight rear legroom & small boot, modest performance, long travel clutch, occasionally bumpy ride.



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Fast facts

Kia Picanto GT-Line

Price: £16,745

Mechanical: 62 bhp 998 cc 3 cyl petrol, 5sp



Max Speed: 90 mph

0 - 62 mph: 15.4 secs

Combined MPG: 57

Insurance Group: 5A

C02 emissions: 121 g/km

Bik rating: 29%, £220FY, £190SR

Warranty: 7 years/ 100,000 miles

Rating: 4/5

Size: L 3.61m (11.84 ft), W 1.60 m (5.25 ft), H 1.49 m (4.89 ft)

Bootpace: 255 to 1,000 litres (9.01 to 35.31 cu.ft)

Kerbweight: 985 kg (2,172 lb)