Kia Picanto 2023 model – Road Test

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The latest KIA Picanto 1.0 small car tried for size and value by Robin Roberts (and Miles Better News Agency).

With motoring costs soaring a lot of drivers are downsizing and face the dilemma of what to buy, yet do not realise how good a modern small 5-door hatchback can be.

In fact, a recent study found the typical family car today costing around £32,700 has thousands of pounds of features, after adjusting for inflation, fitted as standard which were not there a decade ago.

We recently found ourselves facing a 400 miles trip with our Kia Picanto 1.0 triple-pot petrol engine five-speed manual test car and began with some apprehension but also excitement at the opportunity to give a decent run to a modern city car. It was a wise move as it turned out.

The Kia Picanto model-year 23 is the third generation of Kia's baby car and spans nine models in six trim levels, with 66 or 99 bhp 1.0 litre petrol engines, five-speed manual or automated manual transmission from £13,400 to £18,025.

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Depending on the chosen trim, the creature comforts build on a standard package in the Picanto comprising collision avoidance technology, hill start assist and dynamic stability control, sophisticated anti-skid brakes, wireless charging, heated front seats and steering wheel, eight-inch infotainment display, sat-nav, DAB radio, parking camera and sensors. Top models get KIA Connect mobile services and Android and Apple links.

The chunkier styled X-Line S models are slightly roomier and have five-seats but all models get a very comprehensive seven years or 100,000 miles warranty that is transferable to subsequent owners.

The sophisticated three-cylinder petrol engine was very free-revving and while it sounded busy when stretched over the drive, it was always smooth and most of the time settled down to a sewing-machine distant buzz. There were moments on motorways when I wished for a six-speed higher ratio instead of the five-in-hand, but I was delighted with the economy of 56 mpg most of the time before it slightly dipped to our overall 54.2 mpg on cross country

sections.

The responsive engine and quick-change direct gearbox contributed to its eager feedback while its direct electric steering and tight turning circle mean it was agile on twisting roads and easy to park in urban streets. It reminded me of some hot-hatches of the 70s and 80s, but brought up to date with modern infotainment and comfort controls.

Cold mornings and nights make you appreciate the variable heated front seats and steering wheel, rear window heater and the quick warming cabin and screen clearing air conditioning.

Infotainment is by a decent sized touch-screen display atop the dashboard and buttons on

the wheel-spokes, and it's clear and quick responding to inputs.

The driver has a good sized display for engine and road speed directly infront and a changeable rolling display between them for settings to suit what they wish to see. Everything is very clear.

Heating and ventilation controls were simple, strong and effective backed up by four powered windows but no sunroof. Front and rear wash and wipe kept the glass clear and the lights were well up to their task in poor visibility.

Decent sized powered door mirrors, a coloured rear view camera and sensors aided parking but in reality the slim roof pillars did not present a problem when reversing or pulling out

either.

Seats' adjustment was reasonably wide and the front pair were nicely shaped to give support around the back and under thighs. Access was good to them but you had to bend over a bit to slip into the rear pair of seats (note – there are only two rear seats, not three) and legroom might be tight for some passengers.

An offset split back-rest meant the luggage area could be gradually increased in capacity from taking just some bags of shopping or two medium suitcases to much bigger items under the fifth door with its sensible deep and long loadbed.

On the road it easily kept up with traffic flow and using the ratios and power underfoot it could nip around slower traffic without drama if with some excited noise.

Handling was good and the feedback from steering and brakes was intuitive while the roadholding never caused a moment's concern even when it hit some serious potholes.

VERDICT

The ease with which the Kia Picanto GT Line S covered ground and a variety of roads earned my respect for a modern small car and knowing it comes with that outstanding warranty is a reassurance for any driver.

It's a wise buy in today's not so clever world.

For: Lively, agile, well equipped, comfortable, very economical, long warranty.

Against: Small boot and oddments space, busy engine note under load, strictly four seats.

FAST FACTS

KIA Picanto 1.0 T-GDi GT Line S 5-door hatchback

Price: £17,450

Mechanical: 998cc 3-cyl 98 bhp, turbo-petrol, 5 sp

Max Speed: 112 mph

0 – 62 mph: 9.9 sec

Combined MPG: 54.2 (our overall figure on test)

Insurance Group: 11

C02 emissions: 120 g/km

Tax costs: Bik rating 29%, VED £190FY, £165SR

Warranty: 7 years/ 100,000 miles

Size: L 3.60 m (11.81 ft), W 1.60 m (5.25 ft), H 1.49 m (4.89 ft)

Bootspace: 255 to 1010 litres (9.01 to 35.67 cu.ft)

Kerbweight: 1,030 kg (2,271 lb)