Latest Hyundai i30 Hatchback – Road Test

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The new Hyundai i30 mid-sized hatchback – Bland but not basic, says David Miles (Miles Better News Agency).

The all-new third generation Hyundai i30 five door hatchback range went on sale in the UK from 1 March this year and it will be followed by Tourer estate versions due this summer. The two ranges will be similar in terms of engine and specification choices, but a little more expensive – and all are covered by Hyundai's much praised five years unlimited mileage warranty.

The new i30 prices start from £16,995 with 1.0 litre 120 hp and 1.4 litre 140 hp T-GDI turbo petrol engines and a 1.6 litre CRDi 110 hp turbodiesel unit. Six-speed manual gearboxes are available throughout the range with a seven-speed dual clutch DCT auto transmission available for the 1.4 T-GDI petrol and 1.6 CRDi turbodiesel units at the higher specification

levels. The full range of spec levels, depending on the engine chosen, are S, SE, the best-selling SE Nav, Premium and Premium SE.

Whilst the bland and conservative exterior styling and purely functional interior design might not necessarily impress would-be buyers in this competitive class, it is the standard specification and long warranty that will attract, as well as the prices.

All versions have a high level of safety kit with Lane Departure warning, Forward Collision warning, Lane Keep Assist, Autonomous Emergency Braking and Hill Start Assist. All models also get central door locking, electrically adjusted door mirrors, DAB radio, Bluetooth, air-con, electric front and rear windows and driver's seat height adjustment as standard.

The additions to the SE grade include 16-inch alloy wheels, cruise control, front fog lights, five-inch LCD screen and rear view camera. SE Nav additions include sat-nav, eight-inch touchscreen and Bluetooth with voice recognition plus Apple CarPlay and Android Auto phone connectivity. The Premium level additions include 17-inch alloy wheels, dual zone climate control, electric parking brake, heated front seats, artificial leather/cloth seat facings, front and rear parking assist and LED front headlights. The top level Premium SE sees additions such as a panoramic sunroof, real leather seat facings and a heated steering wheel. Current prices top out at £24,885 for the Premium SE 1.6 CRDi automatic.

It’s the competitive prices, long warranty and comprehensive specification that keeps the new Hyundai i30 relevant in today’s competitive C-segment, which is filled with accomplished models such as the best-selling Ford Focus and also the Vauxhall Astra, VW’s new Golf, Skoda Octavia, Renault Megane, SEAT Leon and the more sharply styled Kia Cee’d which is essentially the same car with similar engine options from Hyundai’s subsidiary fellow South Korean brand.

Although a South Korean brand, the Hyundai i30 is developed, tested and manufactured in Europe, but apart from the cascading front grille, walk around the five door car and it’s a bit anonymous, a bit everyday and it doesn’t stand out visually from lots of other offerings. It doesn’t have the wedge shape or wide stance of the athletic looking Ford Focus, the edgier styling lines of the Kia Cee’d or the sharp looks and interior space of the Skoda Octavia. Still, bland exterior styling hasn’t stopped the VW Golf from selling well enough.

Inside the i30 is classier than before but not that inspiring. The materials look uninteresting but it seems well put together and on my best selling SE Nav version the eight-inch touchscreen brought a modern look to the fascia panel. The heater controls are on the small side and a bit fiddly to use, and some of the plastics – especially around the door storage bins – feel a bit cheap. There is a lack of soft feel trim for the fascia for instance, although the texturing is pleasing. The seats are comfortable and the driving position is good. The rear seats are a shade short of legroom and the headroom for adults could be better. However, the boot has a generous 395 litres (13.95 cu.ft) of space and 1,301 litres (45.94 cu.ft) with them folded down.

My test model was powered by the new 1.0 litre, three cylinder T-GDI turbocharged direct injection petrol engine, which is more impressive and is sure to be the best-buy option for retail customers. With 120 hp and a useful 171 Nm (126 lb.ft) of torque delivered from only 1,500 rpm this lightweight unit is really responsive from low engine speeds, with good mid range response and seemingly effortless ability to maintain higher 70 mph cruising speeds on motorways.

In terms of pure acceleration it isn't swift, taking just over 11 seconds to go from zero to 62 mph, but it's good enough for most users. Top speed is 118 mph but it was the ability to cruise at legal maximum speed on open roads that impressed, and the engine remained quiet whilst under load, with the characterful sounding thrum of the triple cylinder engine. The six-speed gearbox needs to be used to keep the engine in its most responsive mode from 30 to 50 mph but above that speed the engine responded well in top gear.

The official Combined Cycle fuel economy is 56.5 mpg but in real-life I never got close to that with a 38.8 mpg overall fuel economy for my week of long and short journeys. As usual most of these modern day three cylinder units do not provide the real-life fuel economy the official tests say they will. With CO2 emissions of 115 g/km the new costly VED road tax rate is £160 for the First Year and then £140 for the new Standard rate for year two onwards which is a big increase on the £0/£30 previous costs. Company car drivers will pay 22% Benefit-in-Kind tax.

On the plus side the new i30's suspension provided good ride comfort. The compliant suspension absorbed bumps from potholes very well and the ride being on the soft side was appreciated, especially on motorway journeys. It was also a little on the soft side during cornering, with a tendency for front wheel drive understeer, and the steering didn't always give predictable feedback, but overall the car was easy to live with and more likely than not, from the point of view of most buyers the accommodating suspension will be another plus point in the i30's favour.

VERDICT

In short the new Hyundai is very good in some areas – such as price, specification, ride comfort, a willing new 1.0-litre engine and a long warranty. In other areas it is less striking –such as its bland exterior design and lack-lustre interior trim. It's just a question on whether the pluses outweigh the minuses. For some potential owners they will; for some they will not.

For: Attractive prices, low insurance cost, high specification, long warranty, comfortable ride.

Against: New much higher VED road tax costs, anonymous bland exterior styling, functional interior finishes, fiddly heating/fan speed adjustment controls.

Milestones and Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

Hyundai i30 SE Nav 1.0 T-GDi 120 five door manual.

Price: £19,805 (£20,230 as tested).

Engine/transmission: 1.0 litre, three cylinder, turbocharged direct injection petrol, 120 hp, 171 Nm (126 lb.ft) of torque from 1,500 rpm, six speed manual.

Performance: 118 mph, 0–62 mph 11.1 seconds.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 56.5 mpg, (38.8 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 115 g/km, new VED road tax rates £160/£140, BIK company car tax rate 22%.

Insurance Group: 9E.

Warranty: Five years/unlimited mileage.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,340 mm (14.24 ft), W 1,795 mm (5.89 ft), H 1,455 mm (4.77 ft), boot/load space 395 to 1,301 litres (13.95 to 45.94 cu.ft), five doors/five seats.