

# KIA PICANTO 1.0

By Jim Mc Cauley



Classic, compact and versatile are the enduring features of the Minis featured in the movie “The Italian Job” and it was to Italy that Kia travelled for the launch of the third generation of their classic, compact and versatile Picanto.

The all-new model does not deviate too far from the styling of the outgoing model, maintaining the same overall dimensions, but the key features are teased out to make the car look a little more aggressive and endow it with a more assertive road presence. The upper grille is now slimmer and leads into the wrap-around headlight units to visually add width to the car

while the deeper, lower grille adds an image of power and strength.

Although the family resemblance is retained, that is where the similarities end, and the car is all-new, built on a new platform with state of the art electronic support packages.

Driving the car is a choice of two petrol engines of 1.0 and 1.25 litres, both developed from the previous units to provide improved fuel consumption and lower emissions. A third 1.0 litre turbocharged engine will join the line-up in September. Although an automatic option is on offer, this is only mated to the 1.25 litre power unit. However, there are five trim levels giving a comprehensive choice of nine models in all.

The 1.0 litre car has a 66bhp, 3-cylinder engine which is surprisingly quiet both at tickover and across the rev band, supported by excellent insulation of the suspension to maintain a cabin that is relaxingly quiet and could put some larger cars to shame in terms of refinement. This engine returns a 0-60 mph time of 13.8 seconds with the potential to see a top speed into three figures. Progression through the 5-speed manual gearbox is ultra-smooth with a short and precise movement between the ratios.





Steering and suspension combine to produce a very confident feel, with the rear suspension of this model substantially changed over that of its predecessor. In terms of comparison with the 1.25 litre car, the 1.0 litre model scores on cornering, steering response and overall handling to provide it with greater character than what the smaller engine option might at first suggest. Yes, it is slightly slower through the gears, but always responsive and never dull, teasing the driver to press on and enjoy the experience. On both engine options, much development has gone into the chassis

construction which is lighter with greatly improved torsional rigidity (32%) than the second series car, thanks in part to the use of more sophisticated steels with resulting benefits to ride and handling.

For the passengers, there are slight gains in cabin and luggage space with the front seat occupants particularly well catered for, and adequate room in the rear but with good access, as the model will only be produced in 4-door form.

Dash design and instrument presentation features the current dominant layout, but with neat detailing on the air vents, steering wheel and raised central infotainment panel. As is the case in most small cars, steering adjustment is tilt only, but its movement maintains clear viewing of the instruments.

For luggage, the rear boot now extends to 255 litres while 60:40 split folding rear seats allow for greater versatility when required. A puncture repair kit is stored underneath in lieu of a traditional spare.

While the choice for both engine options extends to nine models, the 1.0 litre version offers just three trim levels, '1', '2', and 'GT-Line', all with the same 66bhp engine.

Although the range opens with a very well specified model that includes the safety features of six airbags, adjustable height front seatbelts, Electronic Stability Control, Vehicle Stability Management and Hill-start Assist, the better choice is the level '2' model, which builds significantly on the level of specification on '1'. This step, which adds £1,300 to the range-opening price of £9,450 appears to add excellent value for money with air conditioning, all-round electric windows, power adjusted and heated door mirrors, Bluetooth connectivity with music streaming, leather trimmed steering



wheel, upgraded audio system, and exterior upgrades that include full body colouring, chrome grille surround and 14-inch alloy wheels.

For a further £1,200, the 'GT-Line' features 16-inch alloys, and Autonomous Emergency Braking which will bring the car to a complete stop at speeds of up to 50mph if the driver fails to respond to a potential accident situation, and to improve braking response at higher speeds. This level also receives sports bumpers and twin exhaust terminals as well as lighting and trim upgrades.

With regards to running costs, the 1.0 litre car in all trim options has an official combined fuel consumption of 64.2mpg and a CO2 emissions of 101 gms/km. A gear change dash indicator is fitted for those wishing to make the best of their economy figures.

For Kia, the Picanto is an important model, its second-best seller after the Sportage. But unlike 'The Italian Job', there is no doubting if the future of this car hangs in mid-air balance. The model is firmly planted to continue on the road to success for Kia and comfortably muscle in on the small car market with a model that can charm its way onto anyone's driveway.

As with all Kia models, the new Picanto benefits from the company's industry-leading 7-year comprehensive warranty.

(Driven April 2017)