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Motoring Writer

NEW KIA PICANTO



The economic climate means motorists are being squeezed financially and, understandably, drivers are looking to downsize to more economically viable cars. This trend in car-buying means the race is on for motor manufacturers to produce the most frugal cars they can.

Unsurprisingly, the least expensive cars to buy and run are the small ones, and because demand in this sector is growing, Kia has pulled out all the stops to re-invent the Picanto.

The company's smallest car doesn't pretend to be a pocket-rocket, but it offers good enough

performance, with low fuel consumption and CO2 emissions, along with stylish looks. The five-door car, priced from only £7,995 on the road, is available with brand-new 1.0- and 1.25-litre petrol engines, which deliver fuel consumption improvements over the outgoing model of up to 8.5mpg, with CO2 reductions of as much as 15g/km. The larger engine is available with Kia's EcoDynamics fuel-saving technology – an Intelligent Stop & Go (ISG) engine stop/start system, or, alternatively with an automatic transmission.

The three-cylinder 1.0-litre unit develops 68bhp and 95Nm of torque and has an outstanding combined fuel economy of 67.3mpg. The 1.25-litre

host of additional equipment such as Bluetooth connectivity, air conditioning, rear electric windows, 14" alloy wheels, and black upholstery. The top-of-the-range 3 spec adds first-rate features such as automatic air conditioning, heated front seats, a 6-speaker stereo system, 15" alloy wheels, body-coloured side skirts and automatic headlights with LED daytime running lights and unique LED rear lamps.

Safety-wise, all Picanto models have been fitted with electronic stability control, anti-lock brakes, electronic brake-force distribution, to apportion stopping effort to the wheels with most traction, and emergency brake assist system, ensuring



- Max speed: 95 – 106 mph
- 0-62 mph: 11 – 13.9 seconds
- Combined mpg: 53.3 – 67.3
- Engine: 998cc 3 cylinder petrol (1.0-litre) 1248cc 4 cylinder (1.25-litre)
- Max. power (bhp): 68 at 6,200 rpm (1.0-litre) 84 at 6,000 rpm (1.25-litre)
- Max. torque (Nm): 95 (1.0-litre) 121 (1.25-litre)
- CO2: 99 - 125 g/km
- Price: £7,995 – £11,195 On the road



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four-cylinder engine is offered in three guises, all developing 84bhp and 121Nm of torque. In standard form it averages 60.1mpg. With a four-speed automatic transmission fuel consumption is an impressive 53.3mpg. Finally, there is the EcoDynamics version with fuel consumption at 65.7mpg.

The Kia Picanto comes with four trim grades, badged 1, 1 Air, 2 and 3. Standard features include body coloured bumpers, mirrors and door handles, electric front windows, Radio/CD player, trip computer and an immobiliser. A height-adjustable driver's seat and tilt-adjustable steering column provide driver comfort whilst all occupants are protected by a total of six airbags. A 60:40 split folding rear seat allows rear luggage space to grow up to 870 litres.

The Picanto 1 Air provides an option for motorists who want air conditioning, and the good value of the 1 specification, but without upgrading to the well specified mid-grade 2 version. The 2 has a

maximum stopping power regardless of the pressure applied to the pedal by the driver. In addition, every Picanto has front, side and curtain airbags to cushion heads and torsos against impacts from any angle.

Indeed, Kia has undergone nothing less than a design metamorphosis in recent years. The latest Picanto highlights this and reinforces the brand's reputation as a manufacturer of reasonably priced, economical, safe, trend-setting cars.

OH, AND ONE MORE THING...

As with all new Kias, a seven year or 100,000 miles fully transferable warranty is standard on the Picanto.

That kind of assurance alone could well persuade owners of older, gas-guzzling motors to turn their attention to Kia dealerships.