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New Kia Picanto arrives – First Impressions

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Author: David Miles

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Kia's Picanto city car range receives the Crossover look...

David Miles (Miles Better News Agency) gives his initial assessment...

Kia's small city car, the Picanto five door hatchback range, launched in May last year, gains an X-Line Crossover/SUV styled version for 2018.

Although small City Car sales fell by 10% in the UK last year, close to 69,000 buyers were still attracted to this segment. Kia is aiming to boost its Picanto sales by adopting the



more desirable Crossover/SUV styling craze with their new X-Line versions from £12,595.

Other conventionally styled Picanto models are priced from £9,495 through grades 1, 2, 3 and GT-Line to £14,510. There are two petrol engine choices, a 1.0 litre, three cylinder 66 bhp unit with a manual gearbox and a 1.25 litre, four-cylinder 83 bhp engine with manual and automatic gearbox choices.



Ian Mathews, Kia UK's Head of Product, said at the media launch this week, "The Picanto is our second highest selling model range in the UK behind the popular Sportage mid-sized SUVs. I expect the Picanto models to achieve between 12,000 and 15,000 sales in the UK this year and the new X-Line version should take 10% of that total sales figure. He added



that 75% of sales of all Picanto models go to retail buyers and generally in the UK the customers are either in the 20 to 30 years age group or over 50s.

The X-Line model is exclusively available with a 1.25 litre petrol engine and a five speed manual gearbox or with a four speed automatic transmission, available for an extra cost of £650. Both versions are of course only two wheel drive despite their chunky SUV looks and raised ride height. They join Kia's line-up of SUV models including the Stonic, Sportage and new Sorento. All are covered by Kia's seven years 100,000 miles warranty.

Attractively styled with must-have SUV/Crossover chunky looks the X-Line Picanto will also appeal because of their affordable price and low running costs. The manual version has an official Combined Cycle fuel consumption figure of 61.4 mpg with CO2 emissions of 106 g/km which means VED road tax is £140 each year. The automatic version officially returns 52.3 mpg with 124 g/km so VED is £160 First Year rate then £140 thereafter. Insurance is group seven for both versions. When it comes to performance the manual model has a top speed of 107 mph with zero to 60 mph taking 11.6 seconds. The automatic's figures are 100 mph and 13.2 seconds.

The car's Crossover exterior styling gives increased sizing with a 35 mm (1.38 in) longer front overhang and a 40 mm (1.57 in) greater rear overhang and its 15 mm (0.59 in) taller due to the increased round clearance. There are black side sill mouldings and wheel-arch cladding, silver skid plates beneath the front and rear bumpers and twin exhaust outlets. The X-Line models ride on 16-inch alloy wheels with 195/45 R16 tyres. Projection headlights with LED daytime running lights, fog lights and a shark-fin antenna are also included.

This slideshow requires JavaScript.

Inside the X-Line has grey faux leather upholstery and also features satin chrome interior door handles and stainless steel pedals with rubber inserts. A 7.0-inch touchscreen with sat-nav and Android Auto and Apple CarPlay connectivity are fitted as standard as is autonomous emergency braking, hill start assist control, cruise control with speed limiter,



automatic air conditioning and keyless entry with push-button start. Unfortunately the plastic interior trim is best described as durable, it looks okay but it's hard and unappealing, but the high spec improves the ownership potential as does the fashionable Crossover exterior styling.

Passenger and luggage space in the Picanto X-Line is identical to that in the other grades with 255 litres (9.01 cu.ft) of boot space which goes up to 1,010 litres (35.67 cu.ft) with the two rear seats folded down. Front and rear passengers sit higher up for a more commanding view of the road and for a City Car its one of the roomiest on the market. In its X-Line guise, at these early stages of the Crossover craze being adopted for City Cars, the competition is limited to the Suzuki Ignis 1.2 litre 90 bhp five door two and four wheel drive hatchbacks, priced from £11,499, but that is a purpose-built Crossover, not a City Car hatchback restyled to look like one. There are others such as the Vauxhall Viva Rocks and Fiat Panda City Cross at similar prices but look out for more joining the micro Crossover class soon.

The 1.25 litre, four-cylinder, multipoint injection, normally aspirated petrol engine isn't exactly the most modern new technology petrol engine in Kia's armoury but it is well suited to life in the X-Line where it's more about style than performance. With 83 bhp and 122 Nm (90 lb.ft) of torque it's perfectly suited for City Car travel, but it's still refined and powerful enough to cope with longer runs. The relatively ample torque available from 2,000 rpm allows the engine to be flexible and responsive when driven in lower speed traffic conditions, which minimises the need for gearchanges. Once cruising on the open road the fifth gear ratio is high enough for relaxed motoring and potentially good fuel economy.

Matched with the five speed manual gearbox top speed is 107 mph and the zero to 60 mph dash is covered in 11.6 seconds, all immaterial in its likely motoring environment of local journeys. This unit, driven sensibly, will return 61.4 mpg and on my UK media launch test drive around the busy roads of The Chilterns the figure was 43.8 mpg - but the weather was icy cold and the traffic heavy, not good conditions for fuel economy motoring.

By fitting large 16-inch alloy wheels with low profile tyres, to retain the required rolling



radius, the ride comfort was harsh, fidgety and really noisy over coarse road surfaces. The taller ride height doesn't do the handling any favours either as there is more body-roll during cornering and the fore to aft handling was choppy.

VERDICT

If Crossover styling has become a must-have, by all means the Picanto X-Line certainly looks the part and visually its appealing with a good level of spec, and with a better than most warranty. If however a smoother, more comfortable ride is important, stick with a conventional Picanto model.

For: Adds fashionable Crossover styling to functional City Car dimensions, high level of specification, long warranty, fun and easy to drive, cheap to run.

Against: Uncomfortable and noisy ride over poorer road surfaces, lots of hard-feel interior plastic trim.



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

Kia Picanto X-Line 1.25 MPI, manual, Crossover City Car.

Price: £12,595.

Engine/transmission: 1.25 litre, four cylinder, multipoint injection petrol, 83 bhp, 122 Nm (90 lb.ft) of torque at 4,000 rpm, five speed manual.



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Performance: 107 mph, 0-60 mph 11.6-seconds.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 61.4 mpg (43.8 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 106 g/km, VED road tax £140 each year, BiK company car tax 20%.

Insurance Group: 7.

Warranty: Seven years/100,000 miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 3,670 mm (12.04 ft), W 1,625 mm (5.33 ft), H 1,500 mm (4.92 ft), boot 255 to 1,010 litres (9.01 to 35.67 cu.ft), five doors/four seats.