



HYUNDAI Official Partner

Test Hyundai i20 – Autocar (UK)

Hyundai i20 1.2 Comfort

Test date 07 January 2009

Price as tested £10,620

For Price, generous safety equipment, frugal 1.2-litre petrol engine

Against Over-assisted steering, poor cruising refinement,

BACKGROUND

Until recently, it's fair to say that the arrival of a new model from Hyundai was unlikely to cause sleepless nights for rival manufacturers.

But a succession of increasingly competent offerings from the Korean brand has moved it away from the bargain basement position in the market that it used to occupy, and the coming of age was marked by the introduction of the deeply impressive i30 hatchback last year, which proved itself worthy as a genuine rival to the Ford Focus and Volkswagen Golf.

Now Hyundai is hoping to build on its successes with the new i20 supermini, which combines modern design, frugal engines and safety with the brand's tried-and-tested virtues of generous standard kit and one of the best warranties in the business. The i20 replaces the insipid Getz, and will be constructed in India alongside the i10 city car, but it was designed and engineered in Europe.

At £9445, this mid-range 1.2-litre Comfort 5dr is nearly £700 more expensive than the priciest Getz. At the top of the range, an 89bhp 1.4 CRDI diesel in Style trim will cost £11,845.

DESIGN

Hyundai's European design team was clearly briefed to give the i20 pleasant but inoffensive styling, and that's just what they have delivered. It's fair to say that many of the new Hyundai's aesthetic cues riff heavily on those of segment rivals, especially the Vauxhall Corsa-alike rear lights.

Mechanical layout is equally predictable. The i20 sits on a new platform, but its component set is the absolute supermini standard, with MacPherson struts and coil springs suspending the front end and a torsion beam axle at the back. Electric power assistance for the steering is about the most radical item on the spec list.



HYUNDAI Official Partner

Despite being longer and wider than the Getz it replaces, the i20 isn't particularly big by the bloated standards of modern superminis. By luck or design, it's almost exactly the same size as the new Ford Fiesta, itself the de facto arbiter of what constitutes an average supermini, with the Hyundai being just 10mm shorter and 12mm narrower.

But while other manufacturers, including Ford, have successfully cut the kerb weight of new-generation superminis when compared with their predecessors, the i20 has actually put on weight. Hyundai claims a fully loaded 1.2-litre version weighs in at 1085kg, which constitutes a 60kg increase over the old Getz 1.4 GSI and also means it's about 100kg heavier than the Fiesta.

Of course, Hyundai would argue that much of the increase in mass is due to the i20's comprehensive array of standard safety equipment, with the company chasing full marks in the forthcoming Euro NCAP crash test.

Even the most basic versions get six airbags: front, side and curtain. And, although our extremely early test car didn't have ESP, it will be one of very few i20s not to have it; all versions manufactured after February 2009 will come with it as standard.

ON THE ROAD

The 1.2-litre engine delivers its peak 77bhp at 6000rpm and 88lb ft of torque at 4000rpm. That was enough to haul the i20 from 0-60mph in 12.7sec. That's less than a second shy of the time we recorded in a 1.4-litre Fiesta. But above 60mph acceleration tails off noticeably.

The lowish torque peak makes for decent in-gear performance. Indeed, the i20 is actually pretty sprightly. In the i20, 40-60mph in fourth gear takes 10.9sec, against 11.8sec in the Fiesta 1.4. The Hyundai is also quicker to dispatch 50-70mph in fifth gear, 17.1sec comparing well with the Ford's sluggish 21.8sec.

Braking performance is less impressive. The pedal is slightly over-assisted, and there isn't enough of retardation. The stopping time from 60mph is 2.95sec in the dry and 3.3sec in the wet – the latter being nearly half a second slower than the Fiesta.

The lightness of the controls set out the Hyundai's dynamic stall; this is a car designed around ease of operation. The clutch pedal's lack of resistance takes some getting used to, but the light steering and the light, accurate gearshift make the i20 a restful companion.

It's also obvious that the i20 is focused more on comfort than outright handling prowess, the Hyundai's soft suspension settings dealing well with urban potholes. But ask it to travel at a faster clip and the suspension struggles to keep up with short-frequency undulations.

The i20's biggest dynamic flaw is the electrically assisted power steering. It has a strange, gloopy resistance and gives little impression of how much grip is left.

Then there's the modest grip served up by the tyres. Negotiating wet roundabouts at the same speed as prevailing traffic can have the front end nudging wide – so it's good to know that most UK i20s will come with stability control.

That said, all the basics are in place: the chassis has a natural balance and the responses are deft enough.



HYUNDAI Official Partner

LIVING

Compare a modern supermini with one produced five years ago and the difference in cabin materials and quality is amazing; indeed, it's probably the area in which greatest development has been made.

The i20 has a well designed and functional cabin, albeit not one that moves the game on in any way. On the plus side, the Hyundai is spacious, with decent accommodation in the front plus a good range of seat and steering column adjustment. Rear accommodation is even better.

This is one area in which the i20 clearly betters the Fiesta; it's possible to sit one six-footer in reasonable comfort behind another. Boot capacity isn't particularly generous, but a flat load area and a wide tailgate aperture make the most of it.

Controls are clearly and sensibly laid out, although the large, central display for cars with a trip computer is slightly confusing; the 'Trip' button cycles the rather garish screen through various information functions. The audio system sounds crisp; all versions come with an auxiliary sound input socket and Comfort spec and above adds full iPod connectivity.

Yet although the cabin feels up to withstanding the rigours of tough family use, it lacks perceived quality next to some rivals. Disappointingly, one of the nastiest-feeling materials is the surface of the steering wheel.

Despite the increase in price over the Getz, there's no arguing that the i20 still offers good value against its obvious rivals. Even without factoring in the lure of the company's five-year warranty, the i20 is about £1000 cheaper than the equivalent Fiesta.

The biggest disappointment is that the 1.2-litre engine just misses out on the cut-price VED that comes for any car sneaking under the 120g/km barrier. An imminent 'Eco' version is said to do just that.

Other running costs should be refreshingly low. The i20 will be cheap to service and insure, and our test average of 44.0mpg is respectable.

VERDICT



The i20 may well be the perfect car for these cash-strapped times. For those looking for a cheaper alternative that doesn't entail sacrifice, it could be a great way to downsize both ownership and running costs.

Two things stand out. First, Hyundai's decision to offer the i20 with a comprehensive array of standard safety equipment means it will be possible to buy a version fitted with ESP and six airbags (plus air-con) for just over £8000.

Second, the i20's impressive new 1.2-litre petrol engine combines the economy and emissions of a small engine with enough performance to take on more powerful rivals on equal terms.

But despite a strong performance across the board, the i20's generic design and bland driving experience mean it will be a car that will be bought more with head than heart.



HYUNDAI

Official Partner

DATA

How much ?

- **Price as tested** £10,620
- **Price as tested** £9,445

How fast

- **0-30mph** 3.9 sec
- **0-60mph** 12.7 sec
- **0-100mph** no data
- **0-150mph** no data
- **0-200mph** no data
- **30-70mph** 14.2 sec
- **0-400m** 19.2 / 71.4 sec/mph
- **0-1000m** 35.8 / 86.5 sec/mph
- **30-50mph in 3rd/4th** 7.3 / 10.9
- **40-60mph in 4th/5th** 11.2 / 17.1 sec
- **50-70mph in 5th** 19.6 sec
- **60-0mph** no data
- **Top speed** 102 mph
- **Noise at 70mph** 70 dbA

How thirsty?

- **Test average** 44 mpg
- **Test best/worst** 56.6 / 28.4

Government figures

- **Combined/urban** 54.3 / 44.1 mpg
- **CO₂ emissions** 124 g/km

How big?

- **Length** 3940 mm
- **Width** 1710 mm
- **Height** 1490 mm
- **Wheelbase** 2525 mm
- **Weight** 1085 kg
- **Fuel tank** 45.0 litres

Engine

- **Layout** 4 cyls In Line , 1248 cc
- **Max power** 77 bhp at 6000 rpm
- **Max torque** 88 ft at 4000 rpm

- **Specific output** 61.7bp per litre bhp per litre
- **Power to weight** 71bhp per tonne bhp per tonne
- **Installation** F Transverse
- **Bore/stroke** 71.0x78.8 mm
- **Compression ratio** 10.5:1
- **Valve gear** 4 per cyl4
- **Ignition and fuel** no data, Unleaded

Gearbox

- **Type** 5-speed Manual
- **1st** 3.73 / 4.5
- **2nd** 1.89 / 8.8
- **3rd** 1.27 / 13.1
- **4th** 0.96 / 17.3
- **5th** 0.78 / 21.5
- **6th** no data
- **Final drive** 4.24

Suspension

- **Front** MacPherson strut with gas shock absorber, coil springs
- **Rear** Coupled torsion beam axle with gas shock absorber, coil springs

Steering

- **Type** Electrically assisted, rack and pinion
- **Lock to lock** 2.80

Brakes

- **Front** 357mm discs
- **Rear** 203mm drums

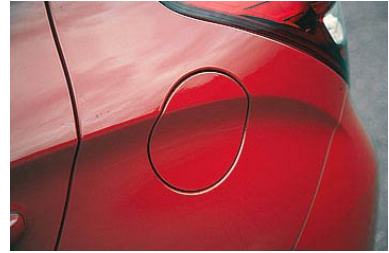
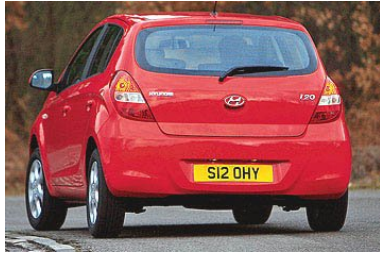
Wheel & tyres

- **Size front** 15" Alloy in
- **Size rear** 15" Alloy in
- **Made of** Alloy
- **Tyres front** 185/60 R15
- **Tyres rear** 185/60 R15



HYUNDAI Official Partner

PHOTOS



<http://www.autocar.co.uk/car-reviews/hyundai-i20-1.2-comfort/236835/pictures/hyundai-i20-1.2-comfort.aspx?im=206644>