



Hyundai i30 (2012 - 2017)

One step closer

Car review | Order a cup of coffee with mayonnaise in a European restaurant and the waiter will ask if you are insane. Order the same in a Japanese restaurant and the waiter will politely accept your order, only to return with a more suitable beverage. A Korean will serve the order and try to learn about your particular taste so as to be of even better service next time. In a similar way, Hyundai continuously scrutinises the wishes of the European customer. The new i30 is supposed to meet the need better than ever before. Did Hyundai succeed?

When a car is being photographed, the trick is to bring out the best. In the first place this is a matter of finding the right setting. After that, the photographer has to search for the most flattering angles. The right light can also work wonders.

Design

When shooting the new Hyundai i30 none of this was necessary; this car looks good from every which way! No matter how the i30 is being photographed, it is a joy to look at.



Even when photographing just a detail like a door handle, it makes for a pleasing picture. Hyundai supplied the best looking car in the most beautiful colour with the highest spec level available for the test drive. Beware: a base model may not look this good.

The new i30 is designed in Europe for the European customer and that strategy works out well. When judged merely by its looks, Hyundai can now measure

itself with formerly untouchable models like the Ford Focus, Vauxhall Astra and Volkswagen Golf. Even the build quality is in the same league.



The interior isn't as playful as the exterior, but still looks good. Again the car in the pictures is a special edition. After the photo session a more basic vehicle was driven and its beige interior didn't have half as much charisma. The room in the front and the rear is average.

Trim level

The i30 again exceeds expectations thanks to the clever build. Hyundai doesn't just offer lots of equipment for a fair price, but takes it one step further every time.



For example, the climate control doesn't only feature

two zones, it also has an air quality sensor. Also, the driver can choose for the air con to either work hard (but audible) or slow (and quiet). The audio system offers good sound quality for a car in this price range. As is the case with every Hyundai, an iPod/USB connector comes as standard.

During the test drive lots of time was spent searching for missing features, but in vain. Except for trivial things like a heated steering wheel or a massage function in the seats there's not a single gadget missing! The only serious problem was with the sat nav: the quality of the routes (in Spain) left much to be desired.



Handling

Another smart feature is "FlexSteer". This doesn't just sound like a Vauxhall/Opel buzz word, it is copied from the competitor as well. With the push of the button the steering is either light ("comfort"), normal or sporty. Choosing the latter, steering is noticeably heavier, providing the driver with better feedback while cornering. A nice side effect is that the heavier steering makes it easier to travel in a straight line at high speeds, adding comfort on long distances.



Even in sports mode the i30 isn't an exciting car to drive. When driving fast, the suspension doesn't break into a sweat (the test car was on Hankook 225/45R17 tyres). Even when thrashing the car around corners, it doesn't come to life and it still isn't any fun to drive. Even though handling is excellent, the i30 offers comfort on bad roads as well (two things that do not always go together).

Diesel

At the moment of writing, the i30 is available with three engines: a 1.6 litre diesel, a 1.4 litre petrol and a 1.6 litre petrol engine. The diesel engine performs very well, yet again lacking character. When more power is required, the diesel engine delivers with both the precision and enthusiasm of a Swiss accountant.



The optional (six speed) automatic does its job the way it should do: unnoticeably. Regrettably, the automatic

gearbox uses depreciated technology making it far less fuel efficient than the manual version.

According to Hyundai, a standard i30 CRDi uses 3.7 litres of diesel per 100 km. With an automatic this increases to 5.5 litres. Despite a very calm driving style and a non demanding route, the test car still consumed as much as 7.0 litres per 100 km.



Petrol

The "GDi" petrol engine is more spirited than the diesel. The petrol engine is eager and willing from the very first moment and performs well. As it should be with a modern power train, even at low engine speed there's lots of torque available. Therefore the petrol engine is as relaxed to drive as the diesel. To remind the driver that he/she can shift up at very low revs a shift indicator is fitted.

Because the 1.6 GDI performs with more ease, it doesn't have to work hard and that makes it easier to drive efficiently.



Conclusion

The concept of the new Hyundai i30 doesn't differ from the previous generation or any other car in this segment. The i30 is still a mid-sized car for an average driver with an average budget. The big difference is that Hyundai meets the demand of the customer even better than before. Hyundai no longer distinguishes itself by a low price, but also tries to exceed expectations. As to design and spec levels, Hyundai certainly succeeded.

The i30 hardly has any drawbacks. The only con is that the engines aren't as efficient as the maker promises. Despite its good looks, driving the i30 isn't exciting at all. This isn't a flaw, but a logical choice in order to appeal to the largest possible audience.

With the new i30 Hyundai doesn't just come close to its European rivals - for the first time Hyundai has passed them. Therefore, the i30 is the first Hyundai one doesn't have to buy because of the price, but the car one chooses to buy because of the attractive model. ■

