



Hyundai ix20

Above average

review | Hyundai promises the ix20 is good at just about everything. The Hyundai ix20 is said not only to be more spacious than the average car, but also more compact. Besides its many practical uses, an appealing design has not been forgotten so this "mini MPV" isn't a square box on wheels. Although the ix20 is cheap to buy, Hyundai claims it is very well specced. Finally, the Korean car maker promises that its latest model uses less petrol than the average car. Can the ix20 fulfil all these promises?

The letters "ix" refer to a special vehicle with Hyundai. The "i20" is a compact family car in a traditional package. The "ix20" on the other hand, is the same size but offers more room inside thanks to its unusual design.

For example, the bonnet is short, so all of the length of the car is used for the cabin. Also, the seats are positioned more upright than in a traditional car, so that the ix20 gains its spaciousness from its height as well as its length.

Making a car higher than usual also makes it easier to get into. The high seating position means the driver has a slightly better view of the traffic than usual.



Space

Despite the high seating position, headroom in the front is huge. Even drivers of up to 2 metres will find a comfortable seating position. The seats can be adjusted enough to accommodate drivers of every posture. The seats of the "Active" version driven here do have one big problem: because there's no adjustable lumbar support, the seats are less comfortable on long journeys.

The main advantage of the ix20 over a car like the Hyundai i20, is the larger room on the back seat. In a car like the i20, adults can only sit comfortably in the back if the driver and co-driver move forward. The ix20 always offers plenty of legroom in the rear.

Behind the back seat the ix20 offers 440 litres of luggage space (with a double floor!), which can be extended to 1,486 litres. By comparison: only an estate car offers this much room.

Trim level

The materials used and build quality of the cabin are fine. Although the ix20 is cheap to buy, it certainly doesn't look or feel cheap.



This is also thanks to its generous spec level. For example, a radio and CD-player with USB connector are standard (FYI: the ix20 can only be connected to an iPod using Hyundai's special cable). Central locking and power windows in the front also come as standard. Hyundai didn't economise on safety either: six airbags, ESP and "hill-start assist" are standard.

Performance and fuel economy

For this test the base engine was used. This 1.4 litre petrol engine develops 90 PS / 137 Nm and that is just right for this car. After a cold start the small engine runs irregular, so it is important to operate the clutch carefully.



Once the engine is at its operating temperature, it performs just fine. Also, the engine is remarkably lively which makes the car feel faster than it actually is.

Because the power train easily revs, one might never notice that it is also torque strong at low engine speeds. This is why a shift indicator shows the best moment to shift up or down in order to save fuel. It then turns out 35 mph in fifth gear (1,500 rpm) with no problem.



60 mph in that same gear means 3,000 revolutions per minute and that is unpleasantly high. On long distances this makes the "ix20 1.4" uncomfortable and this car almost literally demands a sixth gear.

In city traffic fuel economy is improved thanks to a start/stop system. As soon as the car comes to a complete stop, the engine is turned off to save fuel. When first gear is engaged to drive off again, the engine starts automatically. This happens so quickly, that it is never disturbing to the driver. It does, however, blink the headlights, so other cars may think the ix20 is trying to signal them.



According to Hyundai the "ix20 1.4" uses 50 mpg on average. Despite a very calm driving style, the test car travelled three miles less on each gallon.

Handling

Although the name may indicate otherwise, the Hyundai ix20 isn't based on the i20. The ix20 has its own platform and technically resembles the larger i30 more.

The ix20 handles adequately, but it isn't a remarkable car to drive. The suspension isn't too firm or too soft, but just right. Roadholding is very safe, but yet again not remarkable.

However, the ix20 does stand out in city traffic. Its turning circle is unusually small, making it easy to manoeuvre. Thanks to its large windows and mirrors the ix20 makes it easy to change lanes or park in small spaces.



Competition

It is no secret that "Kia" is a subsidiary brand of Hyundai. The ix20's main rival is therefore its own sibling: the Kia Venga. They cars are technically identical. The drive the same and offer the same space.

An important difference between the "Kia Venga" and "Hyundai ix20" is the design of the cars. The Kia owes its charm to simple, elegant lines. The ix20 has a more frivolous appearance.

Conclusion

Does the "Hyundai ix20" live up to all its promises? Mostly: yes. The only "problem" is that competition is fierce and so the marketing department of Hyundai plays every trick in the book. In real life the difference between the ix20 and competing cars is slim. Its rivals also have good handling, offer as much cabin space as possible and try to offer the best possible fuel economy.

However, Hyundai did carefully scrutinise its rivals while developing the ix20. This is why the car scores above average on every aspect. As usual with Hyundai, only the price is below average. ■

Specifications

Hyundai ix20

Size and weight

Length x width x height	410 x 177 x 160 cm
Wheelbase	262 cm
Kerb weight	1.153 kg
Trailer	550 kg
Trailer - braked	1.300 kg
Fuel capacity	48 l
Luggage space	440/1486 l
Tyre size	195/65R15

Engine and performance



Capacity	1396 cc
Cylinders / valves	4/4
power	90 PS @ 6000 rpm
Max torque	137 Nm @ 5000 rpm
Drive	front wheels
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	12.8 secs
Top speed	167 km/h
Average mileage	17.9 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	15.2 l / 100 km
Mileage extra urban	19.6 l / 100 km
CO2 emissions	130 gr / km

Price

Price	Â£ 12,695
Price base model	Â£ 11,595