



Hyundai ix35

Sensible seduction

Review | A couple of years ago it seemed like such a good idea. Many fell for the seduction of an "SUV". These so-called "Sports Utility Vehicles" promised to combine the rough looks and ample space of an off-roader with the comfort of a normal car. But in real life the SUV turned out to consume excessive amounts of fuel and have poor handling. On top of that, the image of the SUV has become politically incorrect. Hyundai now claims to offer a sensible alternative with the ix35.

To avoid any resemblance with an SUV, Hyundai calls the ix35 a "crossover". This is not a civilised off-road vehicle, but an extra large estate. Compared to its predecessor, the Tucson, the ix35 is much lower and wider.

The ix35 is the first car that has been shaped according to Hyundai's "fluidic sculpture" design language. The shapes look like waves, as if the car was sculpted by the wind. The dynamic, and at the same time formal looks, give the ix35 some resemblance to SUVs from luxury brand Infiniti! Especially when seen straight from the front, the ix35 has a tough, self-assured look.



Interior

Regrettably, the cabin is less exciting to look at. The blue lighting makes for a special ambiance, but other than that the ix35 is an unremarkable car on the inside. The number of buttons and levers is limited, which makes the dash look clean. The interior has one tiny flaw: the button to operate the trip computer is located behind the steering wheel, making it unsafe to operate while driving. Just like any other Hyundai,

every ix35 is fitted with an iPod-interface.



The legroom in the rear is above average. The room in the front is fair, but no more or less than that of the competition. This "crossover" sits a bit higher than a regular car. This makes getting in and out of the car easy and gives excellent visibility over traffic. The ix35 doesn't give the driver a mighty feeling; for some the feeling of operating a mighty vehicle makes a car like this particularly attractive.

Off-roader?

The ix35 can be fitted with four-wheel drive, but that doesn't make it an off-roader. All wheel drive is meant as an extra safety feature for driving in slippery conditions. The overhang on the front and back make the ix35 quickly hit the ground on steep descents or obstacles.

Despite its drive train (front-wheel or four-wheel), every ix35 is fitted with an aid to make climbing and descending easier. Most other brands only offer these assistants on four-wheel drive models. The hill descent control makes the car safely descend from a hill with a maximum speed of 8 km/h; the driver doesn't have to operate the brake or throttle. When climbing, the brake is automatically held for two seconds, preventing the car from rolling backwards while accelerating from a standstill.

SUV's are often bought as a towing car. To make the ix35 a serious alternative to an SUV, extra attention

was paid to its towing capabilities. Depending on the engine the ix35 is allowed to tow trailers of 1,600 to 2,000 kg (braked).



Diesel

For now the ix35 is available with one petrol and two diesel engines. First the 136 PS / 320 Nm strong diesel engine was tested. This is powerful enough to easily keep up with traffic, while always offering enough reserve for a quick acceleration. At the same time the engine isn't so strong that it is always teasing the driver to go faster. In other words: the 136 horsepower engine is just right. Despite the engine speed or gear, the "2.0 CRDi" always offers lots of torque making this is a very relaxing drive. The engine noise is average for a car like this.



To save fuel, the battery is disconnected while driving. When the vehicle is braking or coasting, the battery is charged. To further reduce fuel consumption, the ix35

has a shift indicator that shows the most economical moment to shift either up or down. The test car was not fitted with a start/stop mechanism, but Hyundai is planning two extra frugal engines that will have a start/stop system.

Hyundai claims the "2.0 CRDi" uses 5.5 litres of fuel per 100 km (37.6 mpg). On a very demanding track with twisty mountain roads, the test car used 8.0 litres per 100 km (35.3 mpg). After doing some off-road driving and high speed testing, this increased to 8.4 litres per 100 km (33.6 mpg).



Petrol

A second test drive was done with the 163 PS / 194 Nm 2.0 litre petrol engine. This is much more eager than the diesel engine, but has poor performance at high speed. To save fuel the fifth gear is very long. The downside of this choice is that it is almost mandatory to shift down to accelerate when already at motorway speeds. Also, the clutch of the petrol model does require some getting used to.

When driving only on back roads and when trying to be as economical as possible, the trip computer showed an average fuel consumption of 5.5 litres per 100 km (51.4 mpg) for the 2.0i CVT". After completing the same route as previously driven with the diesel model, the fuel consumption increased to 8.7 litres (32.5 mpg). This is a remarkable figure, since diesel engines tend to be more economical by nature. The big difference is that the diesel is always frugal, even when driving at high speeds. The fuel consumption of the petrol engine suddenly increases when driving

fast.

Handling

A big disadvantage of SUV's is their poor handling which is caused by their high centre of gravity and equally high weight. Because of this the ix35 is much lower than a traditional SUV. It also has a firm suspension. The result is that the ix35 hardly tilts over in corners. Even when deliberately making wild moves, the car hardly gets out of balance. Even though the handling of a normal car with the same price tag is still better, compared to an old fashioned SUV the ix35 does offer more safety and far superior handling.



After driving for several days, the ix35 gives the impressions that the Koreans listened very well to their customers and truly scrutinized the competition. The ix35, therefore, complies to every rule and scores on every point. But this doesn't give the car a very strong character. It is like a Barbie doll: it may have the perfect measurements, but still isn't very arousing. In case of a car this may be a good thing, despite that SUV of the past, the ix35 is a sensible seduction.

Conclusion

Is the Hyundai ix35 the long awaited alternative for the SUV? Yes, up to a certain level. Just like every other SUV the ix35 offers tough looks and lots of interior space, but in a more modest package. The driving position is set a bit higher than in a normal car, making the ix35 easy to enter or leave and giving good visibility over traffic.

A traditional car is after all still and more economic.

The ix35 is not a miracle car that forgives and forgets all drawbacks of the SUV. However the ix35 is a big step forward. Both the petrol and diesel engines offer good performance. Regrettably, the low fuel consumption promised by Hyundai is hard to realize in real life.

Because the ix35 is a "crossover" and not an "SUV", four-wheel drive is just another option. Thanks to the firm suspension, handling is safe and predictable. So instead of the conventional SUV, the ix35 is a sensible seduction. ■



Specifications

Hyundai ix35 2.0 CRDi Style

Size and weight



Length x width x height	441 x 182 x 167 cm
Wheelbase	264 cm
Kerb weight	1.433 kg
Trailer	750 kg
Trailer - braked	2.000 kg
Fuel capacity	58 l
Luggage space	591/1436 l
Tyre size	225/60R17

Engine and performance



Capacity	1995 cc
Cylinders / valves	4/
Max power	136 PS @ 4000 rpm
Max torque	320 Nm @ 1800 rpm
Drive	front wheels
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	9.4 secs
Top speed	182 km/h
Average mileage	5.5 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	6.6 l / 100 km
Mileage extra urban	4.9 l / 100 km
CO2 emissions	147 gr / km

Price

Price	Â£ 17,995
Price base model	Â£ 16,495