



Weekend roadtest: Kia Picanto 1.0 T-GDi GT-Line S

Published: 8th June 2019

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Online version: <http://www.wheelswithinwales.uk/weekend-roadtest-kia-picanto-1-0-t-gdi-gt-line-s/>

The Kia Picanto 1.0 T-GDI GT-Line S is a rarity, and it's all the better for that.



In a market dominated by so many look-alike, take-it-or-leave-it cars, the Picanto not only visually stands out but leaves others standing in the Formula Fun race.

You cannot help but turn and look at this cheeky chappie and if you slip behind the wheel you'll emerge with a wide smile of satisfaction.

If you are old enough or enthusiastic enough to remember and appreciate the first hot Mini Coopers, you'll know what I mean. It is, for me, a modern Mini Cooper.



There're over a dozen models to choose from in the Picanto range from shopping trollies to hot hatches using 1.0 or 1.25 litre engines.



At the top of the tree is this GT-Line S with its purposeful looking body, stylish interior with sporting seats and a truly well developed powertrain and chassis underneath.

The engine may be small but its big on technology and turns out some impressive performances, with very eager acceleration, a good useful maximum where conditions permit and remarkable economy if you are looking for that.

Like so many triple-cylinder engines its not an instant firework from standstill but within seconds it's pushing out the power and then it comes on very strongly.

With a light and progressive short reach clutch underfoot and a stubby gearlever in hand for the precise five-speed box, you are soon motoring. Changes are quick and clean without effort or noise.

That means you can also appreciate the beautifully fluid steering and well weighted system,



with excellent vibration-free feedback and precision ploughing through country lanes or placing it very accurately in tight parking spaces in built up areas.

It's the same story with the brakes. The handbrake holds it easily on the steepest hill, the discs drag it down without drama from speed and you can bring it to a gentle stop with a light foot.

So you can enjoy the major controls and the delights they deliver and then reassuringly find the secondary controls also come immediately to hands and fingers. It all works very well.



Instruments are basic but good, a descent size and clearly marked, so easy to read and the on board computer is straightforward.



I liked the infotainment system's simplicity and clarity and the heating and ventilation kept the small cabin cosy as desired with good output, temperature control and distribution.



Oddments room is adequate, not generous particularly in the back, and the boot is very small if you use the back seats but more useful when they fold down.

The room in the back seats is on the short side for anyone who claims to be a teenager or older and access is not brilliant for them, but driver and passenger in front have good legroom unless over six feet and then it gets tight.

Headroom is fine and the shaped seats in front really support and locate occupants and are very comfortable but the rear seats are flatter and not so supporting.

The boxy shape of the Picanto with slim roof pillars means it does give good vision all round, helped by effective wipers and powerful lights. The demisting system is very quick.



The good sight-lines mean you can place the car very accurately on the road and make the most of the performance underfoot, and it comes in eagerly and smoothly. The grip is good and it has an



excellent feedback so you can wind steering on or off to stay on your intended trajectory without any drama or even noise from the wide tyres.

The sporty handling comes with a firm ride and this mayn't be to everyone's liking, but if you buy such a modern hot-hatch you expect it. Fortunately its not stiff over every surface, but you know when you're on a rough one and a lot of that is down to the short wheelbase and those in the back probably feel it more than infront.



A week in the Picanto GT-Line S rekindled memories of early Mini Coopers but its economy brought me back to the modern day and it was surprisingly economical at the end of it.



It's a good commuting car which delivers delight at weekends when you want to getaway.

FAST FACTS

Model: Kia Picanto 1.0 T-GDI GT-Line S

Price: £14,895

Mechanical: 100ps 3-cyl 998cc turbo-petrol, 5sp

Max Speed: 112 mph

0-62mph: 10.1 sec

Combined MPG: 50mpg

Insurance Group: 6

C02 emissions: 117gkm

Bik rating: 27%, £170FY, £145SR

Warranty: 7yrs/ 100,000 miles

Sizes: L3.60m, W1.60m, H1.49m

Bootspace: 255-1010 litres

Kerb: 1020 kg



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For: Zappy performance, very light clutch and gearchange, direct steering and strong brakes, flexible nature, good seats and great warranty

Against: Small boot and little room in back seats, busy engine when stretched, stiff ride over some surfaces.

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