

MOTORING MATTERS *by Anthony Goodwin*

KIA HAS THE POWER TO SURPRISE!

As the cost of car ownership continues to rise, motorists are beginning to look for ways they can save money when it comes to their car. Taxi Globe recently road tested two Kia models, the Picanto and the Rio, both are low in running costs.



Cut The Cost Of Driving With The Kia Picanto

Firstly, Taxi Globe road tested the Kia Picanto. With its cute, friendly face, the Picanto is a great choice within the sub-supermini market. Having been refreshed recently with a new bumpers and lights at both the front and rear of the car, the Picanto has also increased the length by 40mm. Kia has introduced four seats to all Picanto models, thus reducing the overall weight of the car which in turn reduces CO2 emissions to as low as 117g/km. This makes Kia's smallest car not just kind to the environment but kind on your wallet too.

We had the Picanto 3 on test. With the refresh Kia has also changed the trim levels so there are four to choose from. Features of the Picanto 3 are 15 inch alloy wheels and full sports exterior kits, which includes rear spoiler and side sills. Like its big brother the cee'd, you also get an aux USB and iPod port with connector cable. All the functions of the iPod are accessed from the car stereo. As for safety features, for such a small car it has a lot; ABS with EBD, twin front airbags, front seat belt pre-tensioners and isofix top tether anchor points fitted as standard.

This car is great for those who are trying to cut the cost of motoring with even the top of the range model being in insurance group 4; the 1.0 ltr and 1.1 ltr are both in the £35 tax band. The 1.1 auto and 1.1 with 15 inch wheels are at £120. Fuel economy is good news too, with extra urban up to 65.7mpg. Put together with a fantastic 3 yr unlimited millage warranty, and with 3 years servicing costing around £540 you can see how affordable this car is.

Space inside is great with all instruments easy to read and everything you need close to hand. With front electric windows as standard and tinted windows all round, the Picanto 3 has electrically adjustable and heated door mirrors with side repeaters, rear electric windows and air conditioning. This is a great car for city driving being very nimble and with a 4.6 metre turning circle its easy to park and manoeuvre. On motorways it copes with a steady 70 and still feels stable and well planted.

Prices start at £5,995 for the Picanto 1, with the Picanto 3 coming in at £8,035. There are a couple of special editions out at the moment with the Chill, which comes with air conditioning and iPod connection priced at £6,995.

NEW KIA RIO

Taxi Globe's second Kia road test was the Kia Rio, which has also been revised recently. The new Rio is even kinder to the environment. As with the Picanto, Kia has changed the trim level to fall inline with others in the Kia range, there is a Rio 1, Rio 2, Rio 3 and the all new Sport. Kia has been busy changing the engine's electronic control unit with the results being the 1.5 CRDi turbodiesel engine now falls into band b for road tax - that's just £35 per year. It also means you get 68.9 mpg extra urban fuel economy.

The range topping model is the Rio Sport which come with a either a 1.6 petrol or the 1.5 CRDi engine. This trim level means you get 16 inch alloys, a chrome grille, rear spoiler and special interior trim to include a red stitched steering wheel and gearshift grip. Metal pedals, climate control, sunroof are also standard on the sports trim. For those who love a bit of colour then there is a unique colour option called sunset orange. Prices for this model are £9,995 for the petrol and £10,750 for the diesel.

Standard equipment across the range includes twin airbags, front seat belt pre-tensioners, three three point rear seat belts, front and rear head restraints and ABS with EBD. This means a 4 star euro NCAP rating, so it's also a safe car.

Again for those people looking to reduce their motoring expenses, Kia are listening! All Rio's, excluding the Sport, are insurance group 4, servicing over three years will cost around £540. The Rio range starts from £6,995 for the Rio 1. As with the Picanto, there is a special edition available, the Rio Chill, with air conditioning and electric front windows. The petrol is £ 7,995 or £8,970 for the diesel.



DOING SOMETHING FUNNY

Kia was part of "Do Something Funny for Money" this year, raising over £100,000 for Comic Relief. As a supporting partner of Red Nose Day 2009, they also introduced a Limited edition Picanto Red with £100 from every one sold going directly to the charity. All of those who bought the limited edition car also got a huge red nose goody bag and a signed thank you note from Kevin Cahill, Chief Exec for Comic Relief.

Not only did Kia donate from car sales, but their staff at both Kia Motors and Dealerships took part in three legged races, waxing and hosting family fun days. Managing Director of Kia Motors (UK), Paul Phillpott said "I am so proud of everyone that helped us to beat our target of £100,000 for Red Nose Day 2009. It is such an important charity both home and abroad and to think that Kia and its staff contributed to this year's record-breaking total is truly amazing."