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The world can wait, says Shah Rukh Khan, as he steps into the new Hyundai i10. As the mid-segment car debuts in India, our expert emerges from a test drive feeling like King Khan.



# AN i THAT EYES MIDDLE INDIA

**H**undai chose an alphanumerical code that could establish a link between technology and the brand's core values. With the 'i', Hyundai chose the letter that could carry both messages. The letter 'i' has a long tradition as an icon for technology products. And as a frequently used icon, the 'i' is already established across Europe and Asia. The 'i' is also a part of Hyundai's brand promise. In the 1990s, Hyundai changed its entire corporate focus, moving away from its original business philosophy of producing 'good bargain' vehicles, to acquiring a more sophisticated profile.

Hyundai wanted to inspire. The desire to 'inspire' forms one of the cornerstones of the brand. The letter 'i' recognises this fact and brings it direct to consumers.

The i10 is the first Hyundai to carry the 'i' in its name (the first was the i30, which hasn't been launched in India yet). This exciting new city car is designed to be fun to drive, affordable and practical while offering quality and equipment that no rival can offer at the price.

With diminutive dimensions – just 3,565mm long and 1,595mm wide – the i10 promises to be easy to thread through city traffic and a pleasure to park in packed car parks. Although it has compact overall dimensions, the i10 has a wheelbase of 2,380mm, which is exceptionally long for this class. With the wheels pushed far into each corner, there is more space inside for people and luggage, plus it gives the i10 'big car' refinement and handling attributes.

Unlike some of its competitors, the i10 is a full five-seater and has five-door practicality. Prices start at Rs 3.39 lakh (ex-showroom).



One does not have to slouch forward to change gears. The light clutch combined with the precise shift gate ensures that putting the i10 through its paces is sheer pleasure for the driver.



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Delhi) but i10 owners won't for a moment feel they are driving something that has been stripped out to keep costs low. Even the entry-level model has air-conditioning.

Depending on the version, the i10 also has a proper tailgate, rather than just a piece of glass, four opening windows, electrically operated at the front, central locking, electric power steering, tinted glass, 14-inch wheels, body-coloured bumpers and an integrated six-speaker CD/MP3 stereo. To ensure high safety standards across the range, the top-end model, Magna, has two airbags along with anti-lock braking system (ABS).

All i10 models are powered by a 67PS, 1.1-litre petrol engine, mated with either a manual or an optional four-speed automatic gearbox. The gearshift is mounted on the centre console so as to improve ergonomics and free up the

space between the driver and passenger seats.

To drive the i10 is as easy as a doodle. Fire her up and you can feel the 67 horses come alive under your right foot. Initially, I'd thought that the gearshift, being front console mounted, I would have to stretch forward to shift gears, but then good ergonomics ensured that this wasn't to be the case.

I did not have to slouch forward to change gears and the light clutch, combined with the precise shift gate, meant that putting the i10 through its paces was a pleasure. Hyundai had chosen the lovely highway between Jodhpur and Jaisalmer, which is just over 280km, for the drive. This part of India has great road surfaces, which allow one to cruise along at speeds in excess of 140kph without too many problems along the way.

Even with the obligatory stops for photogra-


phy and essentials, like the warm cuppa, we covered the 280km in just over three hours and a half. The i10 was literally singing away even when you made the engine work hard. Rev her up to 6,000rpm and there's not even a whimper of protest. Surprising us, the i10 just lunged forward in a way that we've never seen or expected from a small car. Keeping us busy was the fabulous 2-DIN MP3 music system; the radio had ultra-sensitive station receiving capabilities. The air-con also deserves a mention here, for it succeeded in keeping us cool even in the blistering heat.

Fuel efficiency appeared to be the other strong point of the car. We could not do official fuel economy runs, but I expect the i10 to deliver at least 13-14kpl in the city and about 17-18kpl when it's on the highway.

The i10 definitely is a car that will appeal to all those who are looking at a value-for-money package in a fresh automobile. Having been designed anew from the ground up, the i10 is superbly made – the body panels look good and the finish is millimetre-perfect.

The paintjob is lustrous and the quality of the interior trim is laudable. All these good points mean there has to be a grey streak in this silver lining. I discovered if you're dimensionally challenged like I am, then the front could be a bit of a squeeze. But then this is a minor gripe and I don't think that most of my fellow Indians would have this problem.

But, when you come to think of it, another advantage of the i10 is that being a Hyundai product, its maintenance cost won't add to your financial woes. The i10 is a cheeky and cheerful package that comes for an honest-to-goodness price, which will not cause you any major heartburn!


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