

# A SPARK LOOKALIKE BUT BIGGER



Jim Barnett

The latest Barina Hatch is light and easy to drive but feels solid on the road. It provides low-noise highway cruising, a compliant ride and stable cornering.

And its modern well-laid-out interior boasts plenty of storage areas, such as dual glove compartments.

The driver's seat is height-adjustable and the steering wheel has reach-and-rake adjustments and features buttons for cruise control, audio and phone functions. Directly in front of the driver is a large digital speedometer but an analogue tachometer.

The new Hatch closely resembles the Barina Spark but is much bigger. Built on a longer wheel base, it is longer and wider and therefore provides extra passenger and cargo space.

The Hatch has a 1.6-litre DOHC (85kW/155Nm) engine hooked up to a five-speed manual or optional six-speed automatic transmission with manual mode.

Engine performance is generally good but the car feels a bit sluggish at low revs. Still, working the gearbox to keep the engine on the boil can overcome this.

Holden claims combined fuel economy

of 6.8 litres/100km (manual) and 7.3 litres/100km (auto).

The front and rear seats can accommodate up to four adults. Cargo space is reasonable: 290 litres with the rear seats in use; 653 litres with both rear seats dropped.

An emergency tyre-inflator kit is standard but a full-size spare steel wheel is optional.

Barina Hatch comes in one trim level and hits the market at \$15,990. The only options are automatic transmission (\$2,000) and prestige paint (\$500).

# POINT PROVED

Today's modern diesel engines can outperform their petrol counterparts in every respect, particularly at the fuel pump. Ford's Focus Sport Hatch diesel (a \$3,500 option), with Power-Shift automatic transmission, proves it.

Excellent to drive, it features a new trendy, athletic body – which sits on 17-inch alloys with low-profile rubber – a rear-lip spoiler and an aggressive-looking grille.

The Sport Hatch is part of Ford's new Focus line-up of sedan and hatch variants in four spec levels, with a choice of three engines and two transmissions.

Entry Ambiente Hatch (from \$21,990) comes with a 1.6-litre, four-cylinder petrol engine hooked up to a five-speed manual transmission.

Trend, Sport and Titanium feature a more powerful 2.0-litre, direct-injection four-cylinder petrol engine, but a new 2.0-litre turbocharged diesel engine is available as an option.

A new six-speed dual-clutch Power-Shift automatic transmission is standard on all sedan variants and Titanium Hatch, but a \$2,300 option on all other Hatch models.

Sport Hatch diesel is filled with technology, including voice control for audio and Bluetooth functions. One LCD display features audio information, another one a comprehensive trip computer.

The small leather-bound steering wheel features buttons for many of the car's systems. Sport Hatch's central fascia features dual-zone climate control and an integrated Sony audio system driving nine speakers.

The diesel seems as smooth and as quiet as a petrol engine. Acceleration is brisk and high torque ensures excellent highway and hill-climbing ability.

The transmission, which features a push-button manual (Sport) mode, is well matched with the spirited diesel. Suspension is firm and offers a good combination of flat and predictable cornering with a comfortable ride.

Economy on test was 6.3 litres/100km.

All Focus models score a five-star safety rating and include six airbags, antilock brakes with stability, and traction-control systems.

## Standard features on Sport Hatch include:

- Heated exterior mirrors.
- Auto headlights.
- Rain-sensing wipers.
- Interior LED courtesy lights.
- Auto-dimming rear-view mirror.

## Standard items include:

- Fifteen-inch alloy wheels.
- Cruise control.
- Front and rear power windows.
- Remote locking.
- Air conditioning.
- Four-speaker MP3/CD audio system, with USB/auxiliary inputs.
- Bluetooth audio streaming.
- Bluetooth phone functionality.
- Six airbags.
- Traction and stability control systems.
- ABS with electronic brake-force distribution.
- Front seatbelt pre-tensioners.
- Collapsible pedal-release system.





# UP TO ANY TASK

With its long, low, sleek coupe design, the Hyundai i45 is an impressive-looking car. Available in three models – Active (\$29,590), Elite (\$34,490) and Premium (\$38,990) – it features the Korean carmaker's newly developed Theta II all-alloy, 2.4-litre, direct-injection petrol engine with variable valve timing.

Released last year, i45 is smooth, quiet, surprisingly powerful and up to any task. Its six-speed auto, which offers silky smooth changes in D, can be operated manually from the gear-selection lever or the paddle shifters.

Also impressive is i45's fuel efficiency. Hyundai claims a combined average of 7.9 litres/100km. The *Police Journal* test-drove the Elite – which features a six-speed automatic transmission with manual mode as standard – in the hills and suburbs and achieved 8.1

litres/100km.

The test car featured black leather with metallic garnishing around the cabin. Its dash layout was elegant and sporty and its visibility good.

Its comfortable seats provided plenty of front and rear passenger room. Paddle shifters, for quick manual control over the automatic transmission, were another feature, as was the driver's height-adjustable seat and reach-and-rake steering adjustment.

The boot was enormous. Its flat floor concealed a full-sized spare wheel.

The i45 comes with only a few failings: excessive tyre noise on course bitumen; Bluetooth is not standard; and satellite navigation is not available. Engine noise is an issue, but only at high revs.

#### Standard items across the range include:

- Six airbags.
- Active front headrests.
- Steering wheel-mounted audio and cruise controls.
- USB and auxiliary inputs for iPods.
- Alloy wheels.
- ABS.
- Traction and stability control systems.
- Fog lamps.
- Auto headlamps.

#### Over the base model, Elite comes with:

- Parking sensors.
- Larger (17-inch) alloy wheels.
- Push-button smart start.
- Rain-sensing wipers.
- Leather trim.
- Auto climate control.

# LIGHT AND EASY

The new Kia Rio Si is a smart-looking hatchback with loads of room, comfortable seats trimmed in trendy fabrics, and a well-laid-out central fascia.

Its small leather-wrapped steering wheel has reach-and-rake adjustment and buttons for trip, audio, phone and cruise control functions. The driver's seat is height-adjustable; and rear passenger space is good for a small car, as is the cargo area.

Under the cargo floor is a full-sized spare wheel and, in the centre console, a lidded bin.

With its Gamma GDi 1.6-litre petrol engine, the Rio Si is light and easy to drive around town. The new 1.6 revs freely and provides power effortlessly.

The six-speed auto operates with a minimum of fuss, and Rio is surprisingly agile on winding country roads. It generally offers a comfortable ride but can be slightly harsh on rough surfaces.



Rio prices start at \$16,290. Combined fuel economy is from 5.6 litres per 100km (1.6-litre manual).

This fourth-generation Rio is initially available only as a five-door hatchback, but Kia will release new three- and four-door variants in 2012.

Entry Rio S comes with a new 1.4-litre DOHC four-cylinder (CVVT) petrol engine, which is hooked up to a six-speed manual or optional four-speed automatic transmission with manual mode.

Both Si and SLi models score the more powerful Gamma GDi 1.6-litre petrol engine. This is the smallest Kia engine yet to benefit from Gasoline Direct Injection technology. It develops 103kW

at 6,300rpm and 167Nm at 4,850rpm, a 13 per cent improvement.

The standard transmission on these models is a six-speed manual and the option of a six-speed manual-mode auto.

### The three spec levels are S, Si and SLi, all of which feature:

- Bluetooth.
- Audio systems with auxiliary and USB inputs.
- Six airbags.
- Electronic stability control.
- Hill-start assist.
- Four-wheel disc brakes with ABS, EBD and Brake Assist.

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