



You could buy a top nearly-new German executive car for £23,400, but you could also have Hyundai's tasty i40 Saloon Premium 1.7CRDi for the same amount of cash. Which would you go for BMW, Audi or Hyundai?

By Tim Barnes-Clay, www.carwriteups.co.uk Twitter @carwriteups

HYUNDAI i40 SALOON PREMIUM 1.7 CRDi 136 PS

It's a tough choice. No, really it is. You see, after sitting behind the wheel of this Korean car you start to realise just how far Hyundai has come. The new i40 is handsome with a sleek, sporty profile. It's even more impressive on the move. You can push it into corners and it'll hug the bends quite spectacularly. All the electronic gadgetry to keep it from flipping out reassuringly kicks in time after time.

However, with a slack sounding 0-62 mph time of 10.3 seconds you'd be forgiven for thinking this i40 is a slug. You'd be wrong; the car feels far quicker than the figures on paper suggest. The i40 Saloon's 1685 cc, 4 cylinder 16 valve turbo diesel churns out 134 bhp and delivers a decent amount of pulling power. The six-speed manual gearbox is also very precise and fluid.

The Hyundai is very comfortable on long commutes. It sits at motorway speeds quietly and economically and, as I've suggested, when you take it off the long, dull stretches of tarmac it can be quite a fun car to tackle twisty B roads. And there's a reason for its good handling. At the heart of the i40's class-leading refinement and its responsive handling is an all-new bodyshell. The use of high strength steel together with advanced engineering has resulted in superior stiffness and a structural efficiency that outperforms many rivals. Inside, and from a driver's eye point of view, the i40's controls are very clear and logically set out. The only slight criticism is that the clock is not immediately

obvious. It seems you have to have the sat nav/audio information screen on to see what the time is. Not a big problem. The other niggle is the lack of coat hooks in the rear. These tiny issues are soon forgotten, helped by a good, relaxed, driving position, made easy to achieve with the i40 Premium's electrically adjustable leather seats.

In terms of safety, the i40 is fitted with seven airbags – front, side, curtain and driver knee airbag. And with its stiffer, stronger bodyshell, Hyundai has attained the maximum five-star rating in Euro NCAP's impact assessment programme.

From what I've experienced, the i40 Saloon is a car worth owning or perhaps choosing as your next company car. It may not have the cachet of a BMW or an Audi, but give it time and perceptions might change.

PROS 'N' CONS

- Handsome ✓
- Sticks to the road ✓
- Good driving position ✓
- Safe ✓
- Clock X
- Coat pegs X

FAST FACTS

- Max speed: 125 mph
- 0-62 mph: 10.3 secs
- Combined mpg: 55.4
- Engine: 1685 cc 4 cylinder 16 valve turbo diesel
- Max. power (bhp): 134 at 4000 rpm
- Max. torque (lb/ft): 240 at 2000-2500 rpm
- CO₂: 134 g/km
- Price: £23,400 on the road