

FIRST DRIVE

Hyundai Grand i10 review, test drive and video

Hyundai's Grand i10 is an all-new hatchback that sits between the current i10 and i20 in the carmaker's model line-up.

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DETAILS

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Just when you thought that there were no more niches left in the ever-crowded Indian car market, Hyundai has just found one. The Korean company believes there is a tiny gap between the i10 and i20 and has plugged it with yet another hatchback, called the Grand i10, which is all set to make its world debut in India.

As the rather unimaginative name suggests, the Hyundai Grand i10 is essentially a 'grander' version of the i10, which means it's larger and positioned in a sub-segment higher. Built on Hyundai's BA platform, the Grand i10 is essentially a stretched version (with a 100mm longer wheelbase) of the next-generation i10, which will be launched at the **Frankfurt Motor Show** next month. Hyundai won't offer the Grand i10 for European markets, which will instead get the smaller version of the new i10 that will replace the current model. In India, the Hyundai Grand i10 will co-exist with the current i10, which Hyundai is loathe to phase out as it still sells a cool 7,000 units a month. Besides, the Grand i10 is a completely different car with little in common with its predecessor.

Revealed for the first time to a small and select media gathering in Hyderabad, the first impression of the Hyundai Grand i10 is that of a mature hatchback with noticeably restrained styling (by Hyundai standards). Of course, you can't miss the **Hyundai** styling cues like the hexagonal grille and the slot-like one above it, as well as the well-formed headlights. However, the Grand i10 is less 'fluidic' than the i20 and even the cheaper Eon with fewer cuts and creases. In fact, the Grand i10's character lines are more subtle and less pronounced to give this new hatchback a slightly understated look to suit the conservative tastes of budget car buyers who find the aggressive styling of the Eon a bit too over the top.

Also, the window line of the Grand i10 isn't as sharply raked as the European i10 and the doors are longer too, which makes getting in and out easy for large Indian families. From the rear, the Grand i10 has more than a passing resemblance to the i20 without the pronounced creases. The highlight really is the wraparound tail-lamps, which extend deep into the shoulder line to give a nice stylistic touch.

What Hyundai has got spot on are the overall proportions of the Grand i10. The gently sloping roof, the extra 100mm in the wheelbase and the 14-inch diamond cut alloys all add up to give the Hyundai Grand i10 a nice stance.



Hyundai's strategy is to offer best-in-class features on all its models and the new Grand i10 is no exception to the rule. It will come in four trim levels - Magna, Sports, Asta and Asta (O) - and will have a host of features that are segment firsts. This includes a cooled glove box, auto folding mirrors (which have turn indicators integrated) and a rear air-con vent. The top-spec trim will also get steering-mounted audio controls. Remember, this car is aimed at the likes of the Ford Figo, which feels spartan in comparison. The two-tone dashboard is well made by class standards with decent plastics, chunky controls on the dashboard, and an instrument cluster that houses incredibly clear and legible dials that look brilliant when lit. Storage space is again very generous. Apart from a large boot, the Grand i10's cabin abounds with lots of cubby holes and large door pockets that can comfortably hold 1-litre bottles. Even the solid rear parcel shelf has recesses to hold stuff.

The front seats are nicely bolstered and in fact have a sporty feel to them. The rear seats have impressive legroom but the squab is set a touch too low and this makes the window line feel quite high from the inside. Under-thigh support is good and it's quite comfortable to sit three abreast at the rear, but not over long distances. The Grand i10 simply doesn't have the width or shoulder room of the Indica and the middle passenger has to contend with the aircon vent, which eats into his legroom.

The talking point of the Hyundai Grand i10 is under the hood. Powering this new hatchback is an all-new, 1.1-litre, three-cylinder U2 VGT diesel motor which develops an estimated 70bhp (the power and torque figures have not been disclosed yet). This new three-cylinder U2 engine is essentially the 1.4 four-cylinder unit with a cylinder chopped off. Counter balancing shafts have been used to iron out the inherent imbalance of a three-cylinder configuration. The Grand i10 will also come with the familiar 1.2-litre Kappa petrol engine with a four-speed automatic as an option, but it's only the diesel that we were given to test drive.

We had high expectations of this new compact engine especially since Hyundai has made great strides in diesel technology. However, when you first fire the engine, it's not very impressive. At idle, you can't miss that sharp diesel clatter which quickly goes away when the revs rise. At low revs, the engine is never intrusive and it's only when you near the redline that you can really tell it's a diesel.

The open highway outside Hyderabad airport also served to highlight another of this diesel engine's weakness – a lack of outright punch. Performance feels smooth and linear at best but you truly miss that strong surge in the mid-range that is so typical of more powerful diesel motors. The top-end isn't strong either and the engine labours as you approach the 4,000rpm mark and it's best to upshift early. Overtaking on the highway won't be effortless, especially with a full load of passengers and luggage.

At low speeds however, this compact diesel motor is pretty responsive. There's very little turbo lag and the Grand i10 smartly darts forward from as low as 1200rpm. Clearly, this diesel engine has been tuned to perform city duties and coupled to a five-speed manual gearbox with short gearing, the Grand i10 can effortlessly amble around in town without the need to constantly shift.

It was hard to gauge the ride and handling of the Grand i10 on our short drive on the smooth airport road but the immediate takeaway is the sense of stability and surefootedness the Grand i10 offers at high speeds. It feels much more planted than the previous i10 and even in cross winds is quite stable. The electrically powered steering is quite light and weights up well at speed, but it doesn't feel consistent nor does it deliver feedback in a linear way. Hyundai still has some way to go before it can match Ford's steering feel, which is the benchmark today.

Boxed in between the i10 and i20, the Grand i10 doesn't have too much room to manoeuvre with its pricing and hence we expect a starting price of Rs 4 lakh for the petrol variant and Rs 5 lakh for the diesel variant (ex-showroom, Delhi) when the Grand i10 goes on sale on September 3.