

Fresh this summer

Richard Aucock heads out for a drive in the sunshine: in a MINI One, a new Ford Focus, a SEAT Exeo, a Hyundai ix20 and a Renault Grand Scenic

The choice of cars available through Motability is constantly changing, reflecting an ever-more diverse new car market in the UK. Whatever your preferences and ideals, there is a car at Motability to suit you.

This summer we've tested five of the newest models available to Motability customers. Read on to find out more about each, and to see if they fit your needs.

The supermini MINI 1.6 One Pepper

PERFORMANCE

- 0-62: 10.5 secs
- Top speed: 112mph
- Urban: 39.2mpg
- Extra urban: 64.2mpg
- Combined: 52.3mpg
- CO₂ 127g/km

TECHNICAL SPECS

- Length: 3,699mm
- Width: 1,683mm
- Height: 1,407mm
- Boot capacity: min: 160 litres, max: 680 litres

The fun and fashionable British MINI has been a huge success for BMW. Despite being the entry-level variant it does not look basic, benefiting from all the funky styling elements and BMW-level quality of the pricier MINI Cooper. There is a large range of colour and trim options too (including an automatic gearbox option), meaning each MINI sold can be virtually bespoke. However, although it is bigger than the original, the MINI remains a small car – which brings obvious compromises.

Getting in is easy and the driving position is excellent, with well-placed controls. Visibility is good too. However, the heavy doors are thick – you might need a wider parking bay than you'd expect. Legroom is, of course, limited and access to the rear

is hard due to the lack of rear doors. The boot is small and there is a thick sill to lift items over. But I'm sure no one needs to be reminded that if you regularly have passengers to carry or need a big boot, the MINI is not going to be for you!

The great thing about the MINI is that it's a gem to drive. The 1.6-litre engine pulls exceptionally well, feeling as smooth and sophisticated as the gear change. The MINI is sporty too, with brilliant handling that is guaranteed to generate a smile. The ride is firm and it cruises with assured sophistication. The petrol engine averages an impressive 52.3mpg. Six airbags, air conditioning and stability control are also standard.

mini.co.uk/motability



The small family car Ford Focus 1.6 125 Zetec

PERFORMANCE

- 0-62: 10.9 secs
- Top speed: 122mph
- Urban: 35.3mpg
- Extra urban: 60.1mpg
- Combined: 47.9mpg
- CO₂: 136g/km

TECHNICAL SPECS

- Length: 4,358mm
- Width: 1,823mm
- Height: 1,484mm
- Boot capacity: min: 363 litres, max: 1,148 litres

The all new Ford Focus has been on the market since the spring and is a sophisticated step forward from the previous incarnation of Ford's popular model.

Although still familiar, the styling has evolved and the interior has been

transformed – it is much more modern and upmarket, packing in high-tech features rarely seen on a car of this size. Choose from some of the many equipment and trim options available and you can give your Focus the sophistication of a premium executive car – although the controls for some of them are a bit fiddly, including the multiple buttons on the shapely steering wheel, which I found hard to understand. Ford hasn't forgotten practicality though, with space in good supply.

The driving position is flawless and the Focus is easy to step into – seats have a large range of adjustment for all shapes and sizes. It is very accommodating and comfortable in the back too, but this hasn't hurt boot space. The cleanly designed load bay is wide and offers 363 litres of really usable space. Details like the two sturdy grab-handles on the inside of the boot lid highlights Ford's consideration for ease of use.

Driving controls are smooth but the 1.6-litre engine feels a little flat at low revs. Generally, the Focus has impeccable road manners with, again, the feeling of a much more expensive car. The ride is a bit bumpy at times but the payoff is clean handling and accurate steering. It is a very relaxing cruiser and the sporty seats are impressive. Minor quibbles? We found the brakes more suited for the open road, and the handbrake stiff.

ford.co.uk/motability



The 5-seat MPV Hyundai ix20 1.6 Active auto

PERFORMANCE

- 0-62: 12.2 secs
- Top speed: 114mph
- Urban: 34.0mpg
- Extra urban: 51.4mpg
- Combined: 43.6mpg
- CO₂: 154g/km

TECHNICAL SPECS

- Length: 4,100mm
- Width: 1,765mm
- Height: 1,600mm
- Boot capacity: min: 440 litres, max: 1,486 litres

The stylish ix20 replaces Hyundai's ageing Matrix mini-MPV, and is much more modern and stylish. The smart lines and details such as the headlights and wavy front grill mesh help it stand out – and the interior is even more impressive. It is

a good looking car and the materials are very high quality – although details like the stereo and steering column controls are a touch complicated, while I found the heater dials are hard to grip. There is an abundance of stowage slots and cubby holes, complementing a large 440-litre boot that extends to a vast 1,486 litres with the seats folded flat. With excellent space and comfort in the back too, the ix20 is an exceedingly practical car.

Despite being high off the ground, visibility could be better. Some drivers might find that the tops of the windscreen pillars obstruct vision at junctions and over-shoulder visibility might be slightly obstructed by thick rear pillars. High rear seat backs and a shallow tailgate window further limit vision to the rear, so you'll want to use parking sensors fitted as standard.

The high-mounted automatic gearshift control could be a little smoother, but it does stop any accidental mis-shifts. The car pulls smartly out of the blocks for sprightly city getaways, but is perhaps more disappointing on the move. The 1.6-litre engine lacks a little pulling power and acceleration. It is also a rather whiney and loud engine when revved – and yet smooth and surprisingly able at speed, albeit at the expense of fuel economy. The big tyres grip the road well and stability control technology – which comes as standard – stops you getting into trouble when cornering.

hyundai-car.co.uk/motability



The large family car SEAT Exeo 2.0 TDI 143 SE

PERFORMANCE

- 0-62: 10.9 secs
- Top speed: 122mph
- Urban: 39.8mpg
- Extra urban: 69.9mpg
- Combined: 54.3mpg
- CO₂: 136g/km

TECHNICAL SPECS

- Length: 4,661mm
- Width: 1,772mm
- Height: 1,430mm
- Boot capacity: 460 litres, max: 460 litres

The SEAT Exeo gains extra kudos because it is basically a re-badged Audi A4. Both firms are Volkswagen Group brands and, when Audi replaced the A4, SEAT inherited the production line. As it's not really a completely new design, the Exeo can't be classed as a cutting-edge car either, but despite the familiar look, it still has an upmarket feel. The interior is really high quality and feels just like an Audi – the low sides and dashboard aid good visibility too. It is exceptionally well equipped, with many luxuries as standard, but some of these, such as the climate control, are a little fiddly to use. Door handles inside and out could be better, and the handbrake was too heavy for my liking.

The Exeo isn't the most spacious car around. SEAT altered the front seats last year, to give

more legroom in the back: this has helped, but it still lacks the space of many smaller family hatchbacks. The 460-litre saloon boot is a decent size but the opening is small and the sill quite high. The boot is deep behind the sill, but lifting items in and out might prove tricky for some people. The seat backs do fold almost completely flat though, and there is only a small step in the level of the floor when they're down – ideal for long loads. The diesel engine is a touch noisy at low revs and when accelerating, but is quiet once up to speed. The Exeo cruises very well, with complete reassurance, while both ride and handling feel upmarket. It is a solid, heavyweight drive that inspires confidence and really feels built to last. Economy is fair, at 54.3mpg and the engine is most impressive in relaxed mood once you're up to speed and cruising.

seat.co.uk/motability



The 7-seat MPV Renault Grand Scenic 1.5 dCi 110 Dynamique TomTom

PERFORMANCE

- 0-62: 13.3 secs
- Top speed: 112mph
- Urban: 48.7mpg
- Extra urban: 64.2mpg
- Combined: 57.6mpg
- CO₂: 128g/km

TECHNICAL SPECS

- Length: 4,560mm
- Width: 1,845mm
- Height: 1,645mm
- Boot capacity: 208 litres (564 litres with 5 seats), max: 2,063 litres

The Grand Scenic is Renault's 7-seat version of the 5-seat Scenic – a third row of forward-facing seats at the back is suitable for small children (adults are too big for them). When not in use, the seats fold flat into the floor and can be forgotten. A sleek-looking multi-purpose vehicle (MPV), the Grand Scenic is easy to get into, thanks to tall and flat doors, a low sill and a high front seat. This lofty position behind the wheel gives a real feeling of safety. However, it's a shame the driver's seat doesn't go back further. The dashboard is modern, with digital instruments in the centre that are complemented by a colour sat nav screen. An excellent system, it is standard on all Renault TomTom models. Heater dials are partly obscured though, the

controls on the steering column are short and I found the stereo rather baffling. The high-mounted gear lever is convenient and the electronic parking brake works well. The sliding central storage box is also exceedingly big, adding to a mass of storage places inside.

There is ample room for middle-seat passengers. The rear seats slide individually and fold flat to create a van-like 2,063 litres of space: yet another Grand Scenic virtue. Visibility is excellent with the windows extremely deep, but it is a long vehicle to reverse. The 1.5 diesel engine seems small but packs a punch. Economy is fantastic for such a large machine and, thanks to a six-speed gearbox and low wind noise, it cruises with refinement. Light steering makes easy work of city motoring and the ride is well cushioned.

renault.co.uk/cars/motability





	MINI 1.6 One Pepper	Ford Focus 1.6 125 Zetec	SEAT Exeo 2.0 TDI 143 SE	Hyundai ix20 1.6 Active auto	Renault Grand Scenic 1.5 dCi 110 Dynamique TomTom
Driver access	Seats are flat but long, heavy doors need room to open wide	Clean access into a well designed interior. Wide doors make it easy to get out of	Taller drivers may find the central pillar gets in the way. Doors could be longer	Very easy to get into with a high seat. Central pillar might make exiting more difficult	Excellent: a low sill, tall doors and high seat. Getting out is easy too
Boot space	Small, of course! However, the seats do fold easily for a little extra space	Deep, wide and long. Hard to fault. Practical for all users	Long and roomy but the opening is a bit small. Seats fold easily	Big even with the seats up. With them down it's vast	Tiny in 7-seat mode, but with seats down a huge 2,063 litres
Visibility	Small dimensions make it easy to see out of	Low sides offer clear view out. Pillars not a problem	Good, with low sides and a high seating position	Clear to the sides, but slightly restricted forward and back	High seat and low sides means visibility is superb
Best features	Funky design, high quality, fun drive, economy	Practical use of space, stylish interior	Good to drive and good equipment as standard	Stylish, upmarket interior and equipment	Very large inside, great economy, practical
Motability Advance Payment	Model tested: £749 Range starts from: Nil, T/A	Model tested: Nil Range starts from: Nil, T/A	Model tested: £1,049 Range starts from: £799, T/A	Model tested: £199 Range starts from: Nil, T/A	Model tested: £595 Range starts from: £495, T/A

Note: features and descriptions apply to the models test driven. Images shown are intended as a guide only. For more information please check the car search tool on our website: motability.co.uk. All cars shown are offered on a 'Total Allowance (T/A) basis', where the entire weekly mobility allowance, including any increases, is taken.

On the horizon...

A look at just a few of the cars coming into view soon with Motability

KIA Picanto

The new Picanto from KIA is small on the outside but, as the manufacturer puts it, 'super-spacious on the inside'. The standard model 5-door features front electric windows, body coloured bumpers, handles and mirrors, power steering and a CD and MP3 player. Neat safety features include child seat anchor points and airbags. Electronic Stability Control (ESC), hill-start assist should help make an easy ride around town or out and about in the country. An all-round practical choice.



Citroën DS4

The design of the new DS4 is described by Citroën as being robust, sleek and sporty. It features a panoramic windscreen and a high driving position for good visibility and a handy central console storage space is refrigerated to keep drinks cool. The DS4 also features the manufacturer's intelligent traction control to make driving on slippery surfaces safer while the micro-hybrid eHDi engine helps cut fuel consumption and CO₂ emissions.

Toyota Yaris

The new Yaris is a roomier version of the previous incarnation with some sleek new styling. The car features some impressive technology with the ingenious Toyota Touch & Go multimedia system available on some models, which includes sat nav and a built-in reversing camera via its intelligent dashboard interface. Safety features include vehicle stability control, brake assist, traction control, up to seven airbags and seats designed to reduce injury from whiplash.

