

OWNING AN IONIQ 38

I took delivery of my Ioniq 38 in July 2020, and have driven just over 9000km since. This has given me a chance to assess its strengths and weaknesses and I can now give some impressions to a prospective buyer. This sort of review was lacking when I bought.

Mine is the base model, which came with all the bells and whistles that I need (and quite a few that I don't). I do not need airconditioned seats nor seats that adjust themselves. Neither do I want a sun roof. The base model has a really good amount of kit and I could not justify the expense of the top model.

First impression is that the car is well built and tastefully trimmed. Fit and finish is good, although not everyone will like the rather cheap-looking, silver-painted "grille". The seats are very comfortable, although I always fit lambswool covers (which would subvert the airconditioned seats had I bought the top model). Adjustment is by the usual lever and is quicker than the electric option. Adjustment of the various steering and seat positions is comprehensive even for a 190cm driver. Visibility is good forward but hampered to the rear by a spoiler set across the rear window at such a height as to make it impossible to see number plates and much else. This is partly offset by the rear-view radar which works well.

Getting in and out is easy with large wide-opening doors. The car is low to the ground, so climbing out against a kerb can be a challenge, but this is true for most cars of that type.

The air-conditioner works very well, and I love being able to park and be cool without running the engine as in an ICE. It doesn't seem to affect the fuel consumption very much for local running, and would only be a concern if one were trying to go a very long way between charges.

Driving is a pleasure. The ride is smooth and the weight helps to iron out the bumps. The lack of noise and fuss on acceleration is a real joy. No ICE car can match it.

On the subject of acceleration, I nearly always drive in ECO mode which still makes the car perform briskly. NORMAL makes the car outperform just about everything around, and SPORT is likely to cost you demerit points. In any mode, it will shin up any hill and hold its speed.

I have previously owned lesser EVs and have long-since overcome range anxiety, but the Ioniq is in a different league. I can make two trips to Adelaide from Goolwa and back (80km) without recharging, although I hasten to add that I probably would be anxious on the last leg of the second trip.

I have often gone for a day's drive over about 200km and returned home just below half charge. My real range is 325 to 340km including driving in the hills. However, a drive to Melbourne would require more stops and charges than my patience would allow, so for that, I take the ICE and suffer the lesser experience. I think a 450km range would have me doing the Melbourne trip. One stop to recharge is acceptable.

The Ioniq is very thrifty with electricity. Oddly, it seems to make little difference what mode one is in or how one drives. I have tried driving slowly and fast, and in both Eco and Normal,

and the difference is about 5% in consumption. I have off-grid power with plenty of excess in summer, so to date I have spent less than \$40 on charging to cover over 9000km. This represents about \$140, saving over my ICE fuel costs. That said, the savings will never offset the high purchase price. Buying is more about one's belief in reducing emissions and ability to pay than saving money, although, hopefully, this will change.

So! what's not to like? Quite a few little things actually, and one big one. It can't tow! This was nearly the spoiler. The car clearly has the capacity to tow, but Hyundai steadfastly refuse to allow it. As such, the car is marred for all those who need to use a light trailer. If I did not own an ICE with a towbar, I would not have bought the Ioniq. It is as simple as that.

The other niggles are just that, although they could easily be designed out of future models.

There is no wiper on the rear window and it really could use one. Even moderate rain completely obscures rear vision. The slope of the glass accumulates dirt very quickly. I wonder if that spoiler really does enough to justify the inability to fit a wiper.

The car takes too long to "boot up". If you try to hurry it, it won't register. The musical chorus that greets one becomes annoying as one presses the D button the second time.

The flappy paddles for regen have to be flapped just so, or they don't register. One learns the technique but it can catch you out at first.

On rough winding roads, the lane assist develops a mind of its own. I switch it off.

The touch dash is so sensitive that you can inadvertently change the air-conditioning or radio without actually touching anything.

The auto wipers sometimes don't come on until one can barely see, while at other times they give an arbitrary wipe when there is barely a mist.

Every time one stops and shuts down, the car returns to factory settings. One has to reset the regen, the auto hold and lane assist every time. It would be good if one could elect to set them to suit and they stayed there.

Finally, the main drive controls are scattered around in a totally illogical fashion. The buttons for Drive, Neutral and Reverse are dotted around a little hand rest, but one doesn't need to rest the hand there, there are no gearshifts to do. A simple linear switch or lever would be ergonomically easier and more familiar to drivers from ICEs. The hand brake could also be incorporated in the same switch. As it is, the electric hand brake is behind a short driver! The Start/Stop button is tidily hidden by the steering wheel so first-time drivers might find themselves pressing the nearby fan button which looks similar. One has to take the eyes off the road to change mode or engage the brake hold.

Closing down after a drive is like conducting an orchestra. One has to wave around from console to dash, whereas everything could be neatly grouped on the console in clear view. A design rethink is needed.

All this sounds pretty negative, but it only occurs at start and stop, whereas the drive is such a pleasure that one forgives it all. It is a creditable effort from Hyundai with scope for improvement.

Would I buy it again? Yes, unless there was a comparable model with a tow bar. The price is a little daunting, but it depends on one's priorities. It is definitely worth a test drive.

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