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Kia Cee'd Road Test

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A Healthy Sprinkling of Improvements Should Grow the Kia Cee'd's Popularity



By David Miles (Miles Better News Agency)

A sprinkling of updates inside, outside and under the bonnet of the Kia Cee'd family sized five door Hatchbacks, Sportwagon estates and Pro-Cee'd three door hatchbacks has given the models a mid-life refresh. Also introduced are more fuel efficient engines and a GT-Line sportier looking spec level option.

The Cee'd family has to remain competitive to 'suc-Cee'd' in a very tough market sector filled with high quality, well priced models such as the Ford Focus, VW Golf, Vauxhall Astra, Peugeot 308 and the Hyundai i30.

Although Kia is a South Korean brand, like its parent company Hyundai, the Cee'd was designed and engineered at Kia's Frankfurt centre and it is made at their Zilina facility in Slovakia. The Cee'd family members come with a seven year, 100,000 mile warranty plus the option of Car-3 servicing packages. The warranty and servicing packages are transferable if the car is sold before they expire.

With a reputation for reliability backed up by the class leading warranty and competitive prices, the Cee'd family, together with the popular Sportage Crossover/SUV models, have been largely responsible for the growth of the Kia brand. In the UK last year the brand sold a record 78,500 new vehicles.

Prices for the latest 2016 Cee'd five door Hatchbacks start from £14,905, the Sportwagon estates are priced from £17,395 and the Pro-Cee'd three door versions start at £15,250.

One of the major changes for the refreshed Cee'ds is the option of a new three cylinder turbocharged direct injection petrol engine, known as ecoTurbo T-GDI. Depending on the equipment level spec chosen it is available in 98 or 118bhp forms, and they are claimed to be 10 to 15% more fuel efficient than the 1.4 and 1.6-litre GDI units still used in other versions of the Cee'd family. More downsized engines are promised by Kia in the next few years as manufacturers are forced to reduced engine emissions. The new triple cylinder units both return 57.6 mpg in the EU Combined Cycle test, and CO2 emissions are 113 and



115 g/km, depending on which power output is chosen.

Other engines in the range include a new 1.6 litre CRDi turbodiesel unit with power increased from 126 to 134 bhp, and torque goes up from 280 to 300 Nm (207 to 221 lb.ft). There is also a new seven speed 7-DCT auto gearbox option with this engine. Fuel economy for manual versions of this new turbodiesel engine is 78.5 mpg and CO2 emissions as low as 94 g/km, depending on wheel and tyre size. The 7-DCT version's figures are 67.3 mpg and 109 g/km. This new diesel unit will become the most popular choice of company car and fleet users.

Retail customers could be attracted to the new 1.0 litre T-GDI petrol engines available with 98 or 118 bhp outputs – because of their better fuel economy and lower CO2 emissions. But those potential savings are well and truly offset by the higher purchase price which starts at £17,945. That is around £2,200 more than a similarly specced 1.4-litre 98 bhp petrol unit. That difference in price buys a lot of fuel and road tax.

The choice of specification levels for the more popular five door Hatchback models is wide ranging and somewhat confusing, but they are; 1, SR7, 2, 3, 4, 4 Tech, the new GT-Line and the top GT variant with its 1.6 T-GDI petrol unit which produces 201 bhp.

The mid-life refresh for the Cee'd family includes minor styling changes with new front and rear bumpers, an upgraded interior with higher quality soft touch materials and a new instrument cluster. Even entry level models have a DAB radio, Bluetooth, air conditioning and electrically operated windows. Depending on the spec level chosen, Tom-Tom sat-nav with Kia Connected Services is available, as are heated front seats and more importantly improved road safety driver support functions such as blind spot detection and rear cross traffic alert.

This slideshow requires JavaScript.

A significant addition to the line-up is the new GT-Line. It is aimed at buyers who want the sharper, sportier styling inside and out of the high performance 201 bhp GT version, but



with lower fuel, taxation and insurance costs. The GT-Line is available with the choice of the new 1.0 T-GDI 118 bhp petrol or the new 1.6 CRDi 134 bhp turbodiesel units.

On the Road

To gain a first view of the updated Cee'd family I got behind the wheel of the five door Hatchback with the new GT-Line specification, powered by the 1.0 litre three cylinder, 118 bhp turbocharged T-GDI petrol engine. The price of this model is £20,220.



Visually the exterior of the GT-Line models can be recognised by a deeper front bumper



flanked by ice cube style LED daytime running lights. There is a black lower grille, and above that is a black high-gloss mesh grille with a graphite chrome surround. At the rear is a sports sculptured rear bumper, dual exhaust outlets and LED lighting units. At the side are sill extensions, also 17 inch alloy wheels, plus the rising waistline giving the usual wedge shaped side profile.

Inside the GT-Line spec offers sports style cloth upholstery with a mix of black with grey inserts, leather bound sports steering wheel with lots of controls, alloy pedals, faux black leather door inserts, a matt black finish to the navigation system surround, and high gloss black console tray and air vent surrounds.

Under the body the GT-Line has the standard suspension, steering and braking functions, so the ride is not as firm as the GT model. All the latest Cee'ds have a modified fully independent suspension system for improved ride comfort and sharper handling, but road noise intrusion is high.

So is the Cee'd GT-Line all show and no go? With a 1.0 litre three cylinder 118 bhp petrol engine I expected that to be the case, even allowing for the turbocharging. Top speed is a modest 118 mph, but in reality that doesn't matter, it is more important to have the low to mid range response, given our congested and speed restricted roads. Officially the zero to 60 mph acceleration time is 10.7 seconds and 171 Nm (126 lb.ft) of torque is delivered from just 1,500 rpm, which makes the unit acceptably responsive accelerating from low to mid range speeds.

With that torque available at low engine speeds, the engine is smooth in operation during stop-start commuter traffic. It cannot quite match the overall refinement of some other new but slightly larger capacity triple cylinder turbo petrol engines, such as those from Peugeot/Citroen or MINI, but for a 1.0 litre it's not bad. Where it loses out is during open road cruising and going up hills, both aspects denting its performance; it just feels short of 'muscle'.



Working the engine harder on longer runs such as maintaining the 70 mph motorway cruising speed does affect the real-life fuel economy. Officially this unit will return 57.6 mpg in the EU Combined Cycle, but on my test driving, covering motorways, dual carriageways, rural A/B roads plus some in-town travel, the figure was only 38.5 mpg. With CO2 emissions of 115 g/km, the VED road tax is £0 for the First Year rate and then £30 for subsequent years. Company car drivers choosing this petrol model would have paid 18% Benefit-in-Kind tax until the end of March 2016 but that now goes up to 20% from April.

VERDICT

Overall the new Kia Cee'd scores pretty well with its new styling and better quality interior – it is also roomy and provides a comfortable ride; in fact improvements that most people want. But I'm not convinced that paying the extra cost for the new 1.0 litre turbo petrol engine over a Cee'd with the 1.4 or 1.6 litre GDI petrol engines is worth it, although I liked the new GT-Line spec and styling treatment.

If a sporty looking family hatchback, rather than an out-and-out 'hot hatch', is on your shopping list an alternative is the new Ford Focus Zetec S Red Edition with its 1.5 litre four cylinder 182 bhp turbo petrol engine. It looks sportier, it is sharper in the handling department and the engine is more responsive. The only down-side is the fact that it costs £1,775 more to buy, but it is worth considering.

For: New GT-Line sports styling, improved specification and interior quality, comfortable ride, better value models are available in the new range, low road tax costs.

Against: Road noise intrusion, real-life fuel economy fell too far below the official figure, new 1.0 litre three cylinder petrol engine is significantly more expensive to buy than the current 4 cylinder non-turbo petrol units.



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MILESTONES AND WHEELS-ALIVE TECH. SPEC. IN BRIEF:

Kia Cee'd 1.0 T-GDI GT-Line 5 door hatchback.

Engine: 1.0 litre, 3 cylinder turbocharged direct injection petrol.



Transmission: Six speed manual.

Power: 118 bhp.

Torque: 171 Nm (126 lb.ft) of torque from 1,500 rpm.

Performance:

0-60mph: 10.7 seconds.

Top speed: 118 mph.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 57.6 mpg (38.5 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 115 g/km, VED road tax £0/£30, BIK company car tax 20% from April.

Insurance Group: 11.

Warranty: 7 years/100,000 miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,310 mm (14.14 ft), W 1,780 mm (5.84 ft), H 1,470 mm (4.82 ft), boot/load space 380 to 1,318 litres (13.42 to 46.54 cu.ft), 5 doors/5 seats.

Price: £20,220.