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Kia Soul 1.6 GDI 2 Road Test

Published: May 30, 2017

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Online version: <https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/kia-soul-1-6-gdi-2-road-test/>



Kia gives their range more Soul – the 1.6 GDI

By Robin Roberts (Miles Better News Agency):

Kia Soul is the embodiment of its UK crossover range. It was thought quirky when it came to market a few years ago but the practical shape soon found favour and it has been consistently reworked to keep it up to date.

The Kia Carens, Sportage and Sorento fill needs for SUV buyers while the Soul simply offers a cheaper way into moving people or goods and it's one of the few cars in its class which comes with petrol or diesel engines, sporting and even electric power.

Revised again this year it now consists of seven models from £14,310 to £23,565 each in



standard, premium or two-tone paint and trim versions. The EV (electric) versions with two power outputs cost about £30,000 and £30,500.



We tested the best selling 130 hp 1.6 GDI direct injection petrol in mid-range level 2 trim and it's immediately impressive with its access and room for four or five. The squared tail means the loadspace is good for bulky items and it has a good standard minimum bootspace which triples when the seats are folded away - and that's very quick and easy to do.



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For the driver, the higher than usual seating position gives a good view of the road and with its low waistline and deep windows, bright lights and effective wipers both ends, you can see clearly at all times, helped by sensors.



The 1.6 litre petrol engine gives reasonable power to move four people and it pulls steadily but you know it's working hard by the engine note when it's trying in the intermediate gears. The emissions are on the wrong side of the new BIK limits however, and you pay a lot in road and other taxes as a result when compared with cleaner engines.

The gearchange is good, a light clutch and direct selection mean it's no hardship in town while the steering needs no effort to park and the brakes are good at hauling down speed or holding on a steep hill.

Secondary controls clearly display their purpose and are positioned for ease of use with big instruments and a good infotainment screen to select what you need to know or enjoy.

Heating and ventilation worked well on some unexpectedly warm days and chilly nights with



good selection, output and directional control, backed with powered windows. Oddments room is good throughout the cabin and it is a sensible family car in this respect while having the big boot as well.

Seats in the front are very comprehensively adjustable and wrap around occupants with good support but the rear bench is flatter and the backrests may be too short for some to be comfortable on a long run.



There is a tendency for the tall Soul to roll around corners at speed and it also displayed its desire to run wide if the bend was tight. Easing off the throttle immediately and un-dramatically it came back onto course.

Ride quality was good, if noisy, and it soaked up bumps without troubling occupants too



much.

In performance terms it was respectable but not quick off the mark, it liked to be stirred along through the gears and it was quite long-legged in its nature, which helped us get an easy 40 mpg overall and just a shade below the official combined figure in the mid-40s.

VERDICT

Practical, likeable and easy to drive. On main roads and motorways, the Kia Soul really settled down to the job in hand, covering distance steadily, smoothly and without any fuss whatsoever. You might say it was the 'soul of discretion'.

For: Economy, controls, room, comfort, well equipped, distinctive looks.

Against: Performance, handling, road and engine noises, high VED tax costs.



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Mini Milestones and wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

Kia Soul 1.6 GDI 2.

Price: £17,065.

Engine/transmission: 1.6 litre 130 hp direct injection petrol GDI, four cylinder, six speed manual.



Performance: 115 mph, 0-62mph 10.6 seconds.

Fuel consumption and emissions: Combined Cycle 43.5 mpg (40 mpg on test), CO2 152 g/km, VED £500 First Year then £140 Standard rate, BIK 29%.

Insurance Group: 10.

Warranty: Seven years/100,000 miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4.14 m (13.58 ft), W 1.80 m (5.91 ft), H, 1.60 m (5.25 ft). Boot space 354 - 994 litres (12.50-35.10 cu.ft).