First Test Drive of the Kia Sorento in South Korea

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Robin Roberts (Miles Better News Agency) reports from South Korea on the new Kia Sorento that will make its UK debut in early January.

I have been in South Korea on an automotive media driving and learning trip and during his visit I had a preview test drive in the latest Kia Sorento large seven seat SUV. This range can be ordered now by UK customers with deliveries starting in January 2018.

The booming SUV market is good news for manufacturers and the forthcoming revised Kia Sorento certainly gives the Korean maker something to smile about looking into 2018.

In a very early first drive of the big SUV in Korea last week we were able to evaluate the new eight speed automatic sequential transmission fitted to their 200 PS 2.2 litre CRDi

turbo-diesel engine.

The combination is very good, offering exceptional smoothness through Seoul's congested streets, sharp responses on open very busy motorways and a lot of effortless flexibility delivered in the foothills north of the South Korean capital and adjacent to the Demilitarised Zone.



Without trying to drive with a light foot but against a tight schedule we pushed it over 43 mpg at best and 38 mpg at worst, and emissions drop from 172 to 159 gkm. It offers eco, comfort, sport and smart modes depending on a driver's inclination and a new drive mode select also changes the steering weight of the system and "learns" the driving style to individually match the steering and transmission to get the most out of it in the smart mode.

It also gets the company's optional Drive Wise advanced monitoring to counter distractions and drowsiness to back up lane-assist, automatic headlights and turning lights.

There is a new GT line S spec to replace the KX4 with four-lamp LED front fogs, red brake calipers, prominent sill step and additional badging with diesel derivatives getting chrome exhaust tips.

Inside the top models have quilted leather seating with grey stitching, satin trimmed shift paddles on the column and highlights on the fascia and doors. An eight-inch touchscreen holds TomTom developed navigation, Apple CarPlay and Android Auto for mobile compatibility and wireless charging.

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Sorento was introduced in 2002, replaced in 2009 and the third generation will now take total production to 1.5 Million, with its closest rivals the sister company's Hyundai Santa Fe, the Audi Q5 and Volvo XC60, but the move to SUVs also means it could be attracting traditional large hatchback and saloon buyers as well, said Mr Seokhyeon Kang, of the Kia overseas marketing team.

The new series is available to order now in Britain but prices will not be confirmed for a few weeks and deliveries are expected in January.



Outwardly the new series is recognisable from its new bumpers both ends, LED lights, dark metallic finish to the grille, and 17, 18 or 19 inch new wheels. Sound fans can upgrade to a Harman Kardon system as well.

The five-door body styles offers a choice of five or seven seats with 185 PS 2.0 diesel, a 200 PS 2.2 diesel or 188 PS 2.4 petrol engine, and depending on choice it comes with front and intelligent all-wheel-drive, and a six-speed manual gearbox is fitted to some.

The Sorento sells in over 200 markets worldwide and the UK is the fourth biggest, with Sorento taking about 10% of total Kia UK registrations, said Alex Kim, Kia assistant manager Western European sales. “It’s very important to us and UK customers,” he added.

It’s very roomy as before but now more comfortable, refined and economical with lower

taxation, BIK and running costs. The new exterior look and vastly improved interior with a particularly attractive duo-colour scheme on the test car has sharpened the eye-appeal while the improved technical features will delight all users.

Sorento is the latest Kia to get a GT line which will be added to others in the range while it also raises its game with the high performance Stinger saloon in a direct show of intent to widen the appeal of the range.

Kia has been the top brand in the US for two years and has a programme of 38 new models by 2021, with a staggering 68 revisions to existing models over the same five years.

A year before then it aims to offer 15 Eco models in its line-up including a fuel-cell car, a number of partly automated cars over the next three years and its first fully automated model by 2030.



VERDICT

Kia’s latest, improved version of its large SUV will appeal to many families.

For: Refinement, room and comfort, equipment, oddments space, economy potential.

Against: Acceleration, bootspace with seven seats in use, some blindspots when reversing.

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

Kia Sorento 2.2CRDi Automatic

Mechanical: 200 PS 4cylinder 2.2 TD, eight speed automatic

Price: TBC (current models are priced from £28,850 to £42,045)

Insurance: TBC

Maximum speed: 127mph

0–62 mph: 9.4sec

Consumption: 43.7 mpg

Emissions and taxation: 159 g/km, VED road tax £500 First Year rate then £140 Standard rate + the £310 supplement from year two onwards for five years if it costs over £40k.

BIK company car tax: 33%

Warranty: 7 years/100,000 miles

Sizes: L 4.80 m (15.75 ft); W 1.89 m (6.20 ft): H 1.69 m (5.54 ft)

Kerb weight: 1,980 kg (4,365 lb)

Boot: 142 – 1,662 litres (5.01 – 58.69 cu.ft)