



WHEELS-ALIVE!

www.wheels-alive.co.uk

Ford Kuga – Road Test

Published: January 13, 2020

Author: David Miles

Online version: <https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/ford-kuga-road-test-2/>



OUT WITH THE OLD AND IN WITH THE NEW – FORD KUGA STYLE.

By David Miles (Miles Better News Agency).



The very popular Ford Kuga mid-sized SUV first launched in 2008 is now in its second generation which was launched in 2012 and continues to be very popular with UK customers. It remained for 2019 the second best selling SUV of any size just behind the British built Nissan Qashqai and ahead of the South Korean Kia brand's Sportage.

In the Spring of this New Year the all-new third generation Kuga is due in the UK although order books are already open. This new generation Kuga will not only be available with 1.5 litre petrol and 1.5/2.0 litre diesel engine options but also with a trio of hybrid powertrain options. These will be Mild Hybrid which uses a starter/generator motor, Regular Hybrid which allows for a short electric power only driving range and a PHEV plug-in hybrid with a 31 mile electric only driving range before the 2.5 litre petrol engine chimes into life. Prices range from £23,995 up to £37,796. The Spec levels, depending on the choice of engine, manual or auto gearboxes and 2WD or 4WD will be Zetec, Titanium, ST-Line, ST-Line X and Vignale.

But for the here and now I'm having a final drive with the outgoing Ford Kuga, why? Because of its strong 2019 sales performance, its popularity and because with a new range on its way, maybe there are discounted prices available as dealers clear their stocks. Also for customers wanting a 'used' Kuga there will be plenty of them available once the new models arrive and customers part-exchange their second generation models. The current Kuga range prices vary between £23,375 and £37,200 so as you can see the soon to arrive new Kuga, even with usual petrol/diesel engines and various new hybrid powertrains, are only marginally more expensive than the outgoing models.



My exact second generation Kuga test drive model was the top of the range Vignale spec version with a 2.0 litre TDCi 180 hp/400 Nm (295 lb.ft) turbodiesel engine, six speed Powershift automatic gearbox with Intelligent 4WD. The price is £37,200 but numerous extra cost options pushed it up to £39,220. Some of those extras included 19-inch alloy wheels at £550, power operated panoramic sunroof at £995, heated steering wheel (lovely) at £125 and Active City Stop at £200 - which in my opinion should be standard fit as it is now with many other higher spec competitor models.

However the Vignale spec level is generally comprehensive and includes 18-inch alloy wheels, a mini spare wheel, body style kit, roof rails, rear privacy glass, Bi-xenon HID



headlights with a jet wash function, dynamic beam bending and adaptive beam shape. The spec also includes full leather heated seats, 10-way power adjustable driver's seat, leather covered steering wheel, Sony premium sound system with 9-speakers, the latest Ford SYNC 3 connectivity/infotainment system with an integrated 8-inch touchscreen and AppleLink Apple CarPlay and Android auto connectivity. There is Keyless opening and push button start, hands-free tailgate, cruise control, air-con, rear view camera, Active Park assistant, front and rear parking sensors, auto lights/wipers, Quickclear heated windscreen, power folding door mirrors and Intelligent All Wheel Drive which automatically operates front and wheel wheels for added grip as and when needed. The only items of spec I missed, or couldn't find, were automatically dipping rear door mirrors - a much needed tool when reversing even allowing for the rear view camera and Blind Spot Monitoring which has become a necessary safety aid for motorway driving.

The only real telltale exterior styling cues about the Vignale spec is the exclusive to this spec level hexagonal style mesh front grille, discreet Vignale badging and unique design alloy wheels plus some extra brightwork body trim. But it's the interior's plush-ness that sets this Kuga apart from the many other versions; Ford maybe a manufacturer of mainstream models but it can also supply upmarket versions as well. The Kuga Vignale brings premium car feel and looks to what is another mid-sized family SUV and there are plenty of those to choose from including the Nissan Qashqai, Kia Sportage, Peugeot 3008, Skoda Karoq, Seat Ateca, Volkswagen Tiguan, Mazda CX-30, the Volvo XC40 - and even the Range Rover Evoque is of comparable price to the Vignale spec Kuga.

Styling wise the first generation Ford Kuga launched in 2008 set the trend for mid-sized family SUVs and that progressed and evolved through to the second generation versions. It's a style copied by most other manufacturers with its slightly rising waistline, five doors, a tall tailgate, bold front end styling, well-balanced proportions - and the new Kuga follows a similar path.



It is relatively roomy inside with good front cabin space, family-friendly rear seat legroom thanks to the long 2,690 mm (8.83 ft) wheelbase. There is a 406 litres (14.34 cu.ft) boot which expands to a very usable 1,603 litres (56.61 cu.ft) with the rear seat back folded down. For good measure this version of the Kuga has a braked towing weight limit of 2,100 kgs (4,630 lb). The vehicle's overall length is 4,524 mm (14.84 ft), it's 1,856 mm (6.09 ft) wide and tall for its class with a height of 1,749 mm (5.74 ft), which gives good headroom and visibility for passengers.

This slideshow requires JavaScript.

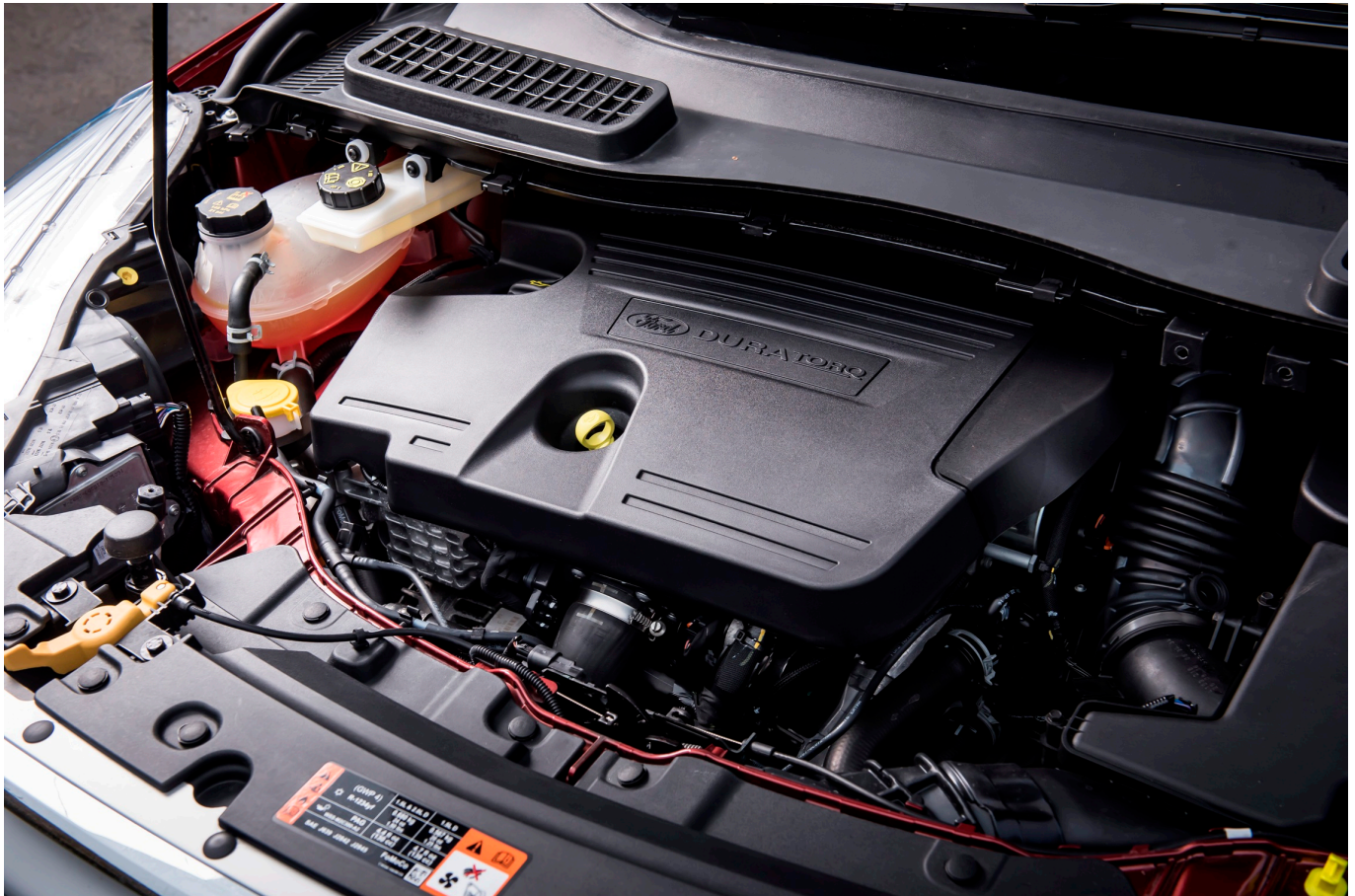
The front cabin is really well laid out with all controls coming nicely to hand and there are separate heating, air-con and ventilation controls so thankfully not lost within the

touchscreen system. Generally visibility for the driver is good but the view is limited at the rear quarters hence my earlier comments about it not having dipping door mirrors for reversing and no Blind Spot Monitoring function that I could find and that is a most useful tool for safer motorway driving.



The Kuga is a good example of what Ford does really well. Sharp well-balanced surefooted handling with a compliant and comfortable ride, despite the fitment of larger 19-inch optional alloy wheels fitted to my test vehicle. The All Wheel Drive system provided really good traction during start-off on wet and slippery surfaces as well as feeling surefooted during fast cornering on wet road surfaces – of which there were plenty during my test driving time. The 2.0 litre, four cylinder TDCi turbodiesel engine we know as a strong performer even when coupled to the six speed auto gearbox and the 4WD system. With 180 hp and 400 Nm (295 lb.ft) of torque from 2,000 rpm there is plenty of ‘grunt’ and engine response from low to high speed motoring conditions. The gearchanges from the six speed

auto transmission were smooth and the ratios well-spaced to make the best use of the high torque output. Top speed is 124 mph and the zero to 62 mph acceleration time is good at only 10.0 seconds.



Perhaps not as good, until you realise the model had an automatic gearbox and 4WD, is the fuel economy. The official new WLTP Combined Cycle is 36.7 to 38.7 mpg which doesn't seem that good but in reality it is given the vehicle's performance and size. During my extended driving period over the two weeks seasonal holiday period the overall figure was 37.1 mpg which I thought realistic. However the CO2 emissions are a relatively high 161 g/km which means First Year diesel rate road tax costs £855 before the £145 Standard rate is applied for year two onwards. Company car drivers get stung for the maximum 37% Benefit-in-Kind tax levy because of the high CO2 figure. The insurance is Group 26E which is more competitive and as usual the Ford warranty is an ungenerous three years/60,000 miles.



VERDICT

There might be an all-new Kuga family on its way but the current range still has plenty to offer, proven by its continued high UK sales demand for new and used models.

For: Proven popularity with high UK sales, well-equipped, well-proportioned styling, relatively roomy, good well-balanced handling, compliant ride, good quality upholstery and interior trim finishes, strong engine, smooth changing auto gearbox, intelligent 4WD.

Against: High tax costs, a new generation range is on its way, no Blind Spot Monitoring function I could find or dipping door mounted rear mirrors during reversing, some rear quarter visibility issues, ungenerous warranty.





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

Ford Kuga Vignale 2.0 litre TDCi, six speed auto, 4WD, SUV.

Price: £37,200 (£39,220 as tested).

Engine/transmission: EU6.2 compliant, 2.0 litre, four cylinder TDCi turbodiesel 180 hp, 400 Nm (295 lb.ft) of torque from 2,000 rpm, six speed Powershift automatic with 4WD. Performance: 124 mph, 0-62 mph 10.0 seconds.

Fuel consumption: WLTP Combined Cycle 36.7 to 38.7 mpg (37.1 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 161 g/km, First Year diesel VED rate £855 then £145 Standard rate, BiK company car tax 37%.

Insurance Group: 26E.

Warranty: Three years/60,000 miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,524 mm (14.84 ft), W 1,856 mm (6.09 ft), H 1,749 mm (5.74 ft), wheelbase 2,690 mm (8.83 ft), boot/load space 406 to 1,603 litres (14.34 to 56.61 cu.ft), braked towing weight 2,100 kg (4,630 lb), five doors/five seats.



WHEELS-ALIVE!

www.wheels-alive.co.uk



Looking ahead... Ford's new Kuga SUV due in the Spring 2020 includes plug-in and other hybrid models.