Fourth generation Kia Sorento 4WD 2.2 Turbodiesel – Road Test

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KIA'S SORENTO NEW LARGE MULTI-SEAT 4WD SUV - A STEP UP IN CLASS AND SIZE...

...says David Miles (Miles Better News Agency).

The original Kia Sorento was launched in 2002 as a utilitarian all-terrain vehicle and the various generations have accrued over three million global sales. But today's fourth generation Sorento is a vastly more sophisticated model than the first incarnations even though it still has the potential to be a 4×4 workhorse when needed. But with seven seats it's more family-use orientated. The 1.6 turbo petrol models have an electrified hybrid powertrain but a 2.2-litre diesel version keeps the door open to high mileage business users

or those country folk who tow trailers and horseboxes. A PHEV plug-in powertrain option will join the line-up later this year priced from £45k.

The new Sorento is a large and very well equipped, spacious 4×4 and sits at the top of the Kia SUV model line up which includes the Stonic, Niro, Sportage and in North America and some other markets the Telluride. Sorento UK prices range from £38,845 to £46,945.



Kia’s latest Sorento family of models.

All current versions have automatic transmissions with multi-mode AWD (all wheel drive) with the petrol models available in ‘2’, ‘3’ and ‘4’ spec levels. The diesel version, my test drive model, is only available with grade ‘3’ specification. Insurance groups range from 30 to 32 but the figures that impress most Kia owners is the brand’s 7-year,100,000-mile warranty.

I’ve been out of circulation for a few weeks due to a house move so I’m only just catching up with various new models like the Kia Sorento. Just looking at the new large 7-seater SUV and it is easy to see why it has already won numerous awards. It looks good; it looks a quality machine edging into premium class. Then adding in new far improved driving manners and the higher specification, improved interior quality and more space, and more awards will surely be on their way to Kia’s front door.

The front of the Sorento has a new and classier interpretation of Kia’s hallmark ‘tiger nose’ grille. It has a wider shape which wraps around the integrated headlamps on each side. This sharper more assertive appearance is complemented by a wide rectangular lower air intake, bookended by wing-shaped air curtains to channel air around the car. A sharp bumper lip is also capped with a skid plate enhancing its robust appearance.



The new model is 1,900 mm (6.23 ft) wide, 10 mm (0.39 in) wider than the last generation version and the side profile's proportions make it appear longer. But the new model is only 10 mm (0.39 in) longer than its predecessor at 4,810 mm (and the balance looks better with shorter front and rear overhangs. The additional length is found in the wheelbase (a result of the Sorento's new platform), which has grown by 35 mm (1.38 in) to 2,815 mm (9.24 ft) and significantly improves legroom for second and third row passengers.

The trailing edge of the longer bonnet wraps around the front wings and turns into a single strong character line which extends along the side of the Sorento and into the rear lamps.

This latest Sorento retains the characteristic wide D-pillar giving it a muscular rear end and strong looking body panels from the waistline down and the usual wheelarch protection mouldings all add up to an overall smart new visual image but one of robustness as well.

Also at the rear the new Sorento has vertical tail lamps which wrap around the side of the body and the lower rear bumper has dual tailpipes and a skid plate adds to its tough SUV styling credentials. The Sorento is available in the UK with a choice of six paint finishes and comes fitted with 17-inch wheels on grade ‘2’, with 19-inch aluminium alloy wheels on all other versions.



The interior of the fourth generation Sorento represents yet another step-change in quality and design for the ever-improving Kia cabins. The utilitarian workhorse image of Sorento's past has long gone as the new model still provides a practical interior 7-seat layout but now far more striking, desirable and comfortable. Yes there is a lot of black interior trim but all of good quality. And there are many controls and switches but I'd rather have those than fiddling around searching through endless pages of a sterile looking soulless touchscreen.

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There are lots of words that could be written about the spec and interior layout but keeping it to a simple description there is an easy to read logical twin digital display in the instrument console right in front of the driver's line of vision. This 12.3-inch digital driver instrument cluster is twinned with a 10.25-inch touchscreen infotainment and navigation system at the centre of the dashboard on grade '3' and '4' models. Thankfully there are proper separate heating, air-con and ventilation controls outside the touchscreen. On Sorento '2' models, an 8.0-inch touchscreen is fitted as standard rather than the 10.25 inch version of the main selling grades.

The cabin of the Sorento boasts a range of other technologies including a Mood Lighting system. This emits soft ambient downlighting from beneath the dashboard and door trim, creating a lounge-like feeling and greater sense of space. A wireless smartphone charger also sits at the base of the centre console. Both of these features are standard on '3' and '4' editions, while a powerful BOSE 10-speaker surround-sound system is fitted on grade '4' models.



The posh cabin blends metallic trim, leather upholstery and embossed satin-effect surfaces on grades ‘3’ and ‘4’ which is fitted throughout the interior and across the dashboard. The new Sorento is offered with a choice of black cloth (grade ‘2’), black leather (grade ‘3’), or black quilted Nappa leather on the top-of-the-range ‘4’ versions. As I’ve said lots of ‘blackness’…

Now forgive me if I just list some of the major other items you need to know about but space and my writing time are running out.

The spec, depending on the grade level, can include a rotary dial gear selector – although I prefer a more precise and faster to use conventional lever type than the fiddly rotary design.

There are 7-seats as standard, the middle row has slide, recline and 60:40 folding

functionality; the third row of seats fold down in a 50:50 fashion flat into the floor.

There is Forward Collision-Avoidance Assist (FCA) with new junction detection as well as city, pedestrian, and cyclist detection, and the latest generation infotainment systems plus Android Auto and Apple CarPlay connectivity are included as standard on all versions. Also there is upgraded 'advanced driver-assistance systems' (ADAS) with added functionality, 8.5-inch head-up display on '4' models, larger brakes for enhanced performance as well as new calliper design for the electric park brake, and a revised electronic stability control system.

The drivetrain has a new Terrain Mode giving a choice between three settings (mud, snow, sand) for enhanced traction in slippery and challenging road (and off-road) conditions.

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There is self-levelling rear suspension fitted as standard on '3' and '4' versions plus Parking Collision-Avoidance Assist (PCA) fitted to '4' versions, preventing the vehicle from colliding with pedestrians or obstacles when entering or exiting a parking space. There is more with Intelligent Speed Limit Assist (ISLA) that automatically changes the speed setting of the smart cruise control on all versions, Multi-Collision Brake Assist (MCBA), Trailer Stability Assist (TSA), Lane Follow Assist (LFA) and Driver Attention Warning (DAW) are all fitted as standard on all models, Blind Spot Collision Avoidance Assist (BCA) and Blind-sport View Monitor (BVM) are fitted to level '4' models, Highway Driving Assist (HDA) simplifies motorway driving, controlling the steering, throttle and brakes to maintain a safe speed or distance from the car in front and finally, but there is a lot more, and wireless smartphone phone charger on grades '3' and '4' is included as standard.

POWERTRAIN VARIETY…

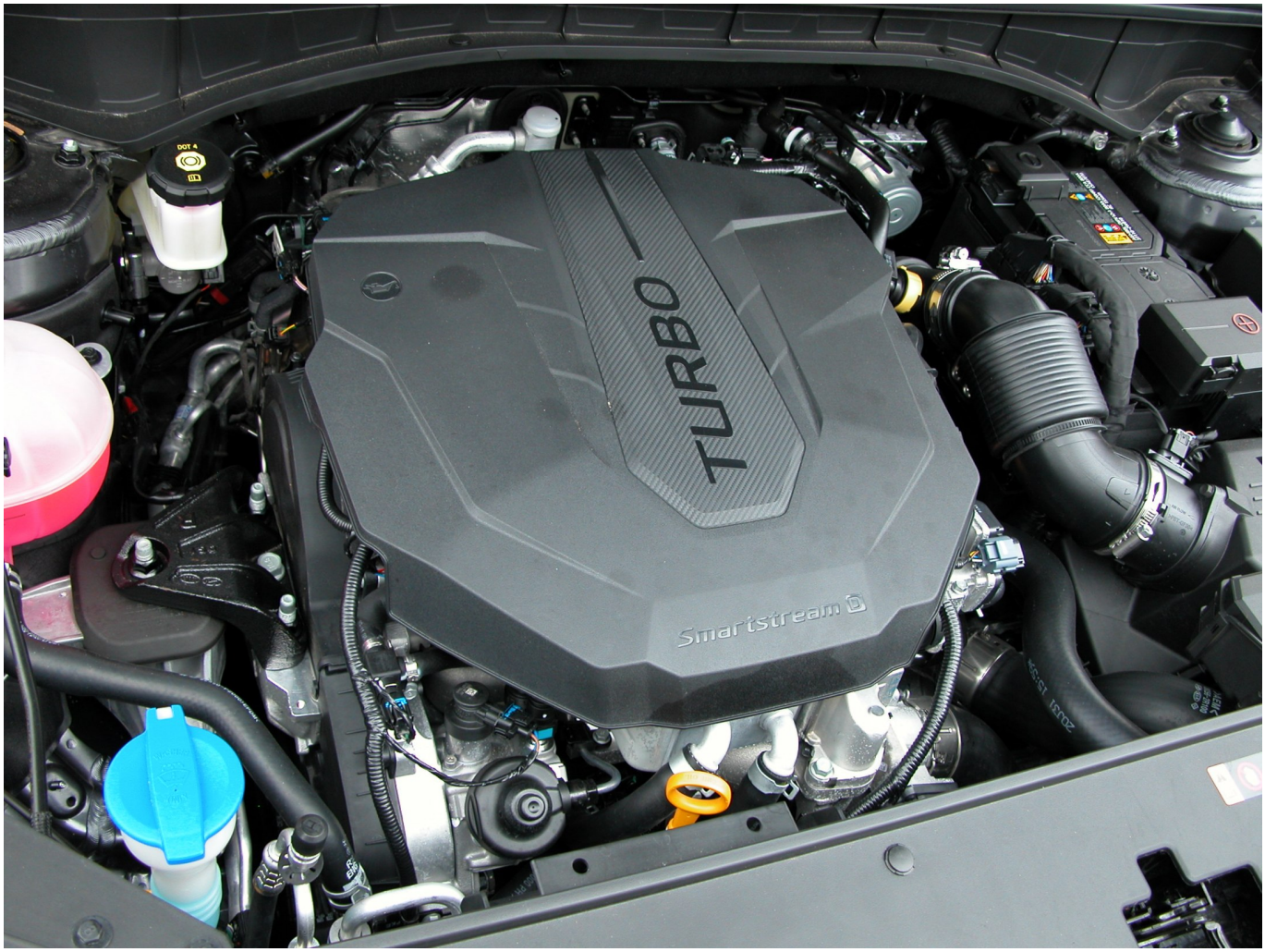
So now it's time to get on to the powertrains. Kia's newest SUV is currently available with hybrid power – a first for a Sorento – and buyers will eventually able to choose from a plug-in hybrid PHEV variant as well.

The latest Sorento Hybrid is powered by a new ‘Smartstream’ electrified powertrain, pairing a 1.6 litre T-GDi (Turbocharged Gasoline Direct injection) 4-cylinder engine with a 1.49 kWh lithium-ion polymer battery pack and 44.2 kW (59 bhp) electric motor. The intelligent packaging of the Sorento’s new platform means the battery pack can be located under the floor with minimal impact on cabin or luggage space.

Producing 226 bhp and 350 Nm (258 lb.ft) torque this electrified powertrain combines lower CO2 emissions with good levels of performance. The new 1.6 litre T-GDi engine features Kia’s new Continuously Variable Valve Duration (CVVD) technology, regulating valve opening time according to driving conditions, instead of operating on a fixed opening time. This boosts performance at low-to-mid engine speeds and helps with fuel efficiency.

Power is sent through the six-speed automatic transmission to each of the four wheels with variable driving torque depending upon the amount of grip each wheel needs. The result is immediacy in acceleration from the engine and electric motor at any speed including direct access to available battery power at higher speeds. Top speed is 119 mph and zero to 60 mph takes 8.7 seconds. The Combined fuel economy ranges from 38.2 to 40.9 mpg depending on the spec grade and CO2 emissions are 158 to 169 g/km.

But my test drive new Sorento was the diesel version and still the preferred choice for me once I start covering high mileage journeys again and of course it will also appeal to country or sports users who might tow a horsebox, trailer or active families with caravans and boats to move around the countryside.



This is a new lighter weight four-cylinder 2.2 litre ‘Smartstream’ diesel engine producing 199 bhp and 440 Nm (325 lb.ft) torque. It is paired with Kia’s new 8-speed wet dual-clutch auto transmission (8DCT) which provides fast and smooth seamless gearchanges whilst maximising fuel economy with its eight gear ratios – which it does with ease due to the wide range of lots of engine torque availability. Top speed is 127 mph, 0 – 60 mph takes 9.1 seconds and the Combined Cycle official fuel consumption is 42.2 mpg. During my week of test driving staying local as Covid regulations dictate the figure was 40.6 mpg, which I found to be impressive given the power and more importantly the torque this very smooth engine provides. With the silky smooth changing auto gearbox it was a pleasure to drive in and around the traffic with effortless cruising on open roads and muscular torque delivery

for accelerating past dawdling drivers out for their ‘stay local’ supposed daily exercise.

The only downside are the usual higher CO2 emissions from diesels, so at 176 g/km tax costs are relatively high with VED First Year costing £870 and then £150 for the Standard rate BUT because this one ‘grade 3’ spec diesel model costs over £40k (£41,245) to that cost must be added a £325 annual fee for 5-years – scandalous tax gathering persecution, and if you are a company car driver you also get hit with the maximum 37% Benefit-in-Kind tax rate as well.

Finally, the ride comfort was excellent in its standard driving mode but there is a selectable Comfort mode if required. Body control and steering response were all good.

VERDICT

So overall there are lots and lots to like and nothing much to be negative about apart from tax costs and the fiddly rotary drive select control. So it’s easy to see why the new Kia Sorento has already reaped in many awards and plenty of motoring media praise so far.

For: Styling, practicality of up to 7-seats or huge load space, very comprehensive spec levels, strong fuel efficient turbodiesel engine, smooth 8-speed auto transmission with various on/off road driving modes, comfortable ride, good road holding for a vehicle of this style and size, long warranty.

Against: Fiddly to use rotary gear select control, high tax costs.

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

Kia Sorento ‘3’, 2.2 CRDi, DCT8 auto, AWD, 7-seat SUV.



Price: £41,245.

Engine/transmission: 2.2 litre, 4-cylinder, 199 hp, 440 Nm (325 lb.ft), turbodiesel, 8-speed auto with selectable on/off road driving modes with on-demand 4WD.

Performance: 127 mph, 0 – 60 mph 9.1-seconds.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 42.2 mpg (40.6 mpg overall on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 176 g/km, VED First Year road tax £870, £150 Standard

rate + £325 annually for 5-years as it costs over £40k, BiK company car tax 37%.

Insurance Group: 31.

Warranty: 7-years/100,000 miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,810 mm (15.78 ft), W 1,900 mm (6.23 ft), H 1,695 mm (5.56 ft), wheelbase 2,815 mm (9.24 ft), boot/load space 616 to 2,011 litres (21.75 to 71.01 cu.ft), braked towing weight 2,500 kg (5,512 lb), 5-doors/7-seats.