Kia cee’d Sportswagon Road Test

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Upgraded Kia cee’d Sportswagon – Good Size and Well-priced.

By David Miles (Miles Better News Agency).

In line with the Kia Pro_cee’d and Cee’d family of three and five door hatchbacks, the five

door Cee'd Sportswagon estate has numerous styling changes and a selection of new or revised lower CO2 emission engines and transmissions. A new GT-Line trim level adds a sporty visual element to the range, which is priced from £16,195 and extends up to £24,295.

The Korean brand has now been in the UK market for 25 years and has sold of 750,000 new cars with an aim to reach the one million marked by 2020. Already this year they have sold 57,609 new cars which is nearly 15% more than the same period last year, which turned out to be an all time record for the whole year of 78,500 units.

Although a Korean brand, Kia believes in designing and manufacturing cars in the markets they sell in. So for Europe the Cee'd family is designed and engineered at Kia's Frankfurt studios in Germany and built at their Zilina plant in Slovakia.

Kia has moved away from their first years of operation where their range of models was well-engineered and reliable but blandly styled inside and out and cheap in price but with high specification. Today their models offer high quality, attractive looking versions with prices comparable with mainstream volume manufactures, and Kia's trump card is the firm's seven year, 100,000-mile warranty. This appeals to retail and a growing number of fleet customers as well.

The Sportswagon is a fleet favourite with business users who account for over 80% of its UK sales. Competitor models in its C-segment include the Ford Focus Estate, VW Golf Estate, Vauxhall Astra Sports Tourer and the roomiest of all – the highly rated Skoda Octavia Estate.

The latest Cee'd Sportswagon range includes a new 1.0-litre, T-GDI 118 bhp three cylinder ecoTurbo petrol engine with CO2 emissions of 115 g/km and a new 1.6 litre CRDi 134 turbodiesel unit with CO2 emissions from 102g/km. These sell alongside 1.4 GDI 98 bhp non-turbo petrol and 1.4 CRDi 89 bhp turbodiesel units. Depending on the engine chosen there are six speed manual or new seven speed dual clutch automatic gearbox choices. Again, depending on the engine chosen, the specification choices are numerical with 1, SR7

2, 3, 4 and GT-Line.

My test car was probably the likely ‘fleet’ favourite, the new 1.6 litre 134 bhp, diesel manual with level 2 spec priced at £18,395. With CO2 emissions of just 102 g/km VED road tax is £0 for the First Year rate and then £20 for following years. Company car drivers will pay 20% Benefit-in-Kind tax and insurance is Group 13E.

Whether it’s a fleet user, business user-chooser or retail customer kerb appeal is an important ownership factor. Unlike its blandly styled predecessors the Cee’d family of models are edgy, sharp-looking vehicles, with a rising waistline above sculptured door panels and giving an aerodynamic silhouette. At the front is Kia’s signature ‘tiger-nose’ grille between sleek profile wrap-around headlights. There is a revised design front bumper with a horizontal lower section, enhancing the look of width of the car. At the rear are LED light clusters and for most grades 16 or 17-inch alloy wheels and roof rails. These features, plus chrome trims around the windows, grille and lights, all add a final flourish to the kerb-appeal.

Inside it is much the same as before with a few items of added trim plus some changes to the instrumentation, controls and switches, and on higher spec versions there is a new 7-inch touchscreen. There is a considerable amount of durable plastic trim but it at least it doesn’t look cheap. The standard specification includes electric front windows, electrically operated and heated door mirrors, air-con, tilt and reach adjustable steering column, multi-function steering wheel controls, central locking, cooled glovebox, 60/40 split flat folding rear seats, load area cover, iPod compatible audio system, DAB radio, Bluetooth, electronic stability control and hill start assist. The grade 2 spec level on my test car had a higher class of cloth upholstery, plus chromed foglight surrounds, LED daytime running lights and cornering lights, cruise control, centre arm rest, parking sensors, plus Flex Steer adjustable weight and feel steering system.



But being an estate, or Sportswagon as Kia calls it, is probably all about size for most potential owners. At just over 4.5 metres (14.76 ft), the relatively long wheelbase gives better than average in this class rear seat legroom and still leaves enough space for a boot of 528 litres (18.65 cu.ft) up to the load area cover with all rear seats upright. Fold the seats down and this goes up to 1,660 litres (58.62 cu.ft) which puts it into a class above the norm in this sector, and for good measure the boot floor is flush with the tailgate sill. Braked towing capacity is 1,500 kg (3,307 lb) for the 1.6 litre diesel, so that is a useful feature as well.



When it comes to the performance the 1.6 litre turbodiesel engine has been significantly improved. Power has gone up from 126 to 134 bhp and more importantly torque rises from 265 Nm (195 lb.ft) to 280 Nm (206 lb.ft) and even better it is available from 1,500 rpm instead of 1,900 rpm, which really improves the responsiveness of this engine. With the improved power and torque matched with the six speed manual gearbox, it offers a much more spirited drive when needed and a more relaxed drive with less gearchanging for more leisurely motoring conditions. I take it to mean ‘Sport’ in the name of this model is about its looks rather than its performance.



Top speed is 121 mph and the zero to 60 mph acceleration time is a reasonable 10.1 seconds. Officially the vehicle will return 72.4 mpg in the Combined Cycle and during my week long motoring using motorways, A/B roads, country lanes and some in-town travel the consumption was 54.8 mpg, well short of the official figure. I did at one stage during a constant 50 mph drive in a long line of moving traffic see 60.1 mpg come up on the computer. With CO2 emissions of 102 g/km VED road tax is free for the first year and only £20 after that so running costs are low.

Another bonus is the Sportswagon's very good ride comfort, important for high mileage business users. The estate might not be the most dynamic in its handling performance but the ride is compliant without too much body roll and the torque vectoring steering keeps

cornering understeer in check. Road noise intrusion is higher than most of its competitors despite Kia's latest efforts to improve sound insulation in their latest generation models. It is still work in progress in some areas of driving refinement for them.



VERDICT

Although the Kia Cee'd Sportswagon is unlikely to impress 'wanabe' Audi and BMW company car drivers, for most practical users it is certainly worth looking at. It is after all the looks, value for money, good specification, interior space, the comfortable ride and the long warranty that will be most people's priorities buying an affordable estate in this C-sector of the new car market.

For: European stylish good looks, competitive specification, roomy with lots of load space, comfortable ride, well priced, long warranty.

Against: Not as dynamic in terms of handling as a Ford Focus or VW Golf estate, road noise intrusion, real life fuel economy didn't come close to the official figure.



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

Kia Cee'd Sportswagon 1.6 CRDI '2' manual. Price: £18,395.

Engine/transmission: 1.6 litre, four cylinder turbodiesel, 134 bhp, 280 Nm (206 lb.ft) of torque from 1,500 rpm, six speed manual.

Performance:

0-62mph 10.1-seconds.

Top speed: 121mph.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 72.4 mpg (54.8 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 102 g/km, VED road tax £0/£20, BIK company car tax 20%. Insurance Group: 13E.

Warranty: Seven years/100,000-miles.

Dimensions/capacities:

L 4,505 mm (14.78 ft), W 1,780 mm (5.84 ft), H 1,485 mm (4.87 ft), boot/load space 528 to 1,660 litres (18.65 to 58.62 cu.ft), braked towing weight 1,500 kg (3,307 lb), five doors/five seats.