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Kia EV4 Fastback GT-Line S – Road Test

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The Kia EV4 is a landmark model for the brand as their first zero emissions hatchback and Fastback saloon, and it will seriously challenge the Continental luxury brands. Robin Roberts (and WheelsWithinWales) takes the wheel...

The hatchback is built in Slovakia with a slightly smaller bootspace than the Fastback assembled in Korea and both models have a choice of 58.3 kWh standard battery or 81.4 kWh long range pack, in three trim levels, Air, GT-Line or GT-Line S, but with a special edition Motion derivative for now as well.

Prices rise from £30,995 for the EV4 hatchback with the Gov car grant to £46,995 for the Fastback GT-Line S which does not have the benefit of the grant. Hatchback models feature fold-down rear seats taking capacity to 1,415 litres (49.97 cu.ft), but not in the Fastback



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(the boot of which has a capacity of 490 litres or 17.30 cu.ft).

Our range topping GT-Line S came with intelligent LED headlights, powered sunroof, heated rear seats, smart tailgate, vehicle to load charger, eight-speaker Harman Kardon system and customisable head-up display.



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It's a big Fastback and immediately impressed with its flowing lines and interior roominess, although the bootspace is long and wide but not particularly deep.



Access was very good throughout if a long reach into the front of bootspace, but the excellently shaped, attractively upholstered seats and amount of adjustment room to the front pair really delighted everyone.

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Space has a premium inside and it did not skimp on oddments room either with pockets, recesses, trays or bins throughout. There was even a shallow tray beneath the boot floor for seasonal items such as screenwash or deicer.

There is no front luggage area, the space being completely filled by the motor while the traction battery lives under the cabin floor towards the rear to spread the load and improve roadholding.

You have five driving modes to select and utilise in a variety of conditions and weather and simply scroll through them on a switch at the bottom of the wheel hub. Obviously, how hard or gentle you drive will ultimately determine the possible range and mixing modes we saw an indicated 380 miles displayed, which is what Kia state, so that's a very useful distance for most drivers.

Acceleration was strong, much more so in the Sport mode, and it quickly picked up from rest while happily maintaining a place in briskly flowing motorway traffic.

The steering was well weighted to give good feedback and precision while proving agile in town when parking, but it is a big car and needs caution in some parking spots.

At speed the steering felt more remote and not quite as sharp, throttle response was immediate and the brakes very strong however and the hold-brake worked well on some steep slopes and in traffic queues.

Secondary controls were straightforward stalks, well placed and worked well too with driver assistance systems grouped on the steering wheel spokes along with some infotainment buttons.

Additional buttons for heating and ventilation, temperature and fan were low on the centre of the fascia with a few concealed buttons hidden above them on the fascia edge but sometimes illegible in certain lighting conditions.



That said, the A/C did work very well with strong output, a wide range and directional control, but I did wonder if it could have been better thought out and designed.

The infotainment screen was very wide, not too high, and packed with features and touch controls best set up before beginning a journey if possible. The driver has essential dials directly in front of them with a heads-up display on our model as well – which is programmable to show only what you want to see as essential, and that was pin-sharp and uncluttered, quick to view and supported by some gentle alarms or reminders.

Every control logically fell to touch or eyes even if there were a lot of them to master. Very bright headlights, excellent washers and wipers and good demisting meant you easily saw items ahead and to the sides.

Moving slowly was more of a gently-does-it progress relying on the car's all round cameras and sensors to ease into tight spaces as the back was sightless from the driving seat and the high rear parcel shelf obscured the view as well.

Warnings in the door mirrors covered the sides and alerted to passing traffic while the car's intelligent cruise control kept it within limits unless disabled. Conveniently, a driver could select the following distance to maintain a safe gap in poor light.

Generally, handling the EV4 was entirely safe and predictable but it felt like a big car, not a sporting saloon, and while the seats and ride were comfortable the suspension could be heard working away as the big wheels and 19-inch tyres patted over bumps with a slight bias towards firmness. Otherwise mechanical noises were low.

Externally and inside, the Kia EV4 GT-Line S Fastback turned heads and drivers should appreciate the refinement while passengers will be very happy with the room and power points to use in the rear on long trips, as well as the sophistication.

It looked and felt well made and was packed with features which might surprise any driver of a premium European brand who normally would expect to pay a lot more.

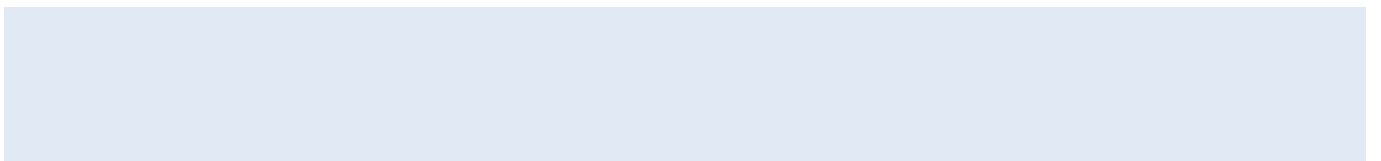


VERDICT

As is the nature of automotive design and engineering, the features which define the Kia EV4 saloon will surely find their way down the range to a new generation of smaller models from the Korean brand. It's going to be an exciting time.

For: Sophisticated, refined, roomy, economical good range, comfortable, reasonable performance.

Against: Road and suspension noises, some blindspots, distracting infotainment screen and concealed buttons.





FAST FACTS

Model: Kia EV4 Fastback GT-Line S auto

Price: £45,445

Mechanical: 201 bhp motor, 81.4 kWh battery, front-wheel drive

Max Speed: 105 mph

0 - 62 mph: 7.9secs

Range: 380 miles

Insurance Group: 38D

C02 emissions: Zero

Bik rating: 4%, £10FY, £200SR

Warranty: 7 years/ 100K & 8 years battery

Size: L 4.73 m (15.52 ft), W 1.86 m (6.10 ft), H 1.40 m (4.59 ft)

Bootspace: 490 litres (17.30 cu.ft)

Kerbweight: 1,914 kg (4,220 lb)