KIA EV9 Air RWD – First Impressions

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KIA has turned the corner into a new market segment with its EV9 pure electric model, says Robin Roberts (and WheelsWithinWales).

The EV9 seven-seater launches in three trim levels and an additional range-topping six-seat option from £65,025 to £78,775 in rear wheel drive or all-wheel-drive configurations depending on trim with 200 bhp single or 378 bhp twin motors.

That puts it squarely into Mercedes and BMW electric model territory alongside the latest VW ID.Buzz or Tesla Models X and Y.

We wanted to see how the entry-level EV9 Air measured up as it turned the corner for the brand, and it’s an impressive addition to the luxury BEV sector for big families or businesses

such as chauffeur services.

Striking exterior styling is matched with eye-pleasing interior detailing and practical modern control, comfort and communications features.

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It has the highest level of automated driving assistance so it can be guided to a location within signed speed limits and through traffic and even park itself while the user steers and monitors junctions and surroundings for unexpected events. Cameras and sensors around the EV9 keep everything flowing to the driver’s eyes and ears.

Our test car had only the one motor under the floor driving the rear wheels, the AWD versions have another upfront, and it coped well with two people aboard. Performance was reasonable not remarkable and over a mixture of A and B class roads including country lanes but no motorway sections.

We saw an indicated maximum range of over 270 miles between charging. That’s a good practical range for most users if you consider the average commute is about 24 miles round-trip a day.



Fortunately, if you have to do longer distances the EV9 has been designed to take the maximum power generally available and then it would be under 30 mins to fully charge, enough time for a refreshment break, before it set off for another 270+ miles.

KIA engineers have carefully refined the front struts and rear multi-link suspension to give the heavy EV9 a good, stable and comfortable ride with strong brakes and fairly good steering feedback for a large MPV. It is big to park in most bays or older multi-storey car parks however.

Where size matters, the EV9 delivers the goods. Total loadspace is massive with usefully folding flat 2nd and 3rd row seats and occupants can easily climb into the front or middle seats but it would be more of an adventure for children to use the rearmost pair of seats and

then legroom might be tight for some. The EV9 has a remarkable amount of oddments space throughout the cabin and passengers can select their own air conditioning zones and temperatures.

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Drivers have a massive triple screens' display infront of them with essential, desirable and practical instruments behind a wide display which looks like one unit. Column stalks operate wipers and there is stubby stalk for the power and direction controls.

For a big vehicle, the EV9 handled well and really soaked up potholes and bumps with its 21-inch tyres and long travel suspension.

VERDICT

The arrival of the EV9 shows the road that KIA is taking and I expect many features will find their way into smaller models in future and that's still more bad news for rivals who are languishing behind them in the sales showrooms.

For: Excellent build quality, refinement and equipment, good range, low ownership costs, reassuring warranty, very comfortable.

Against: Modest performance, road noises, needs big parking space, very packed instruments & features display.



FAST FACTS

Model: KIA EV9 Air RWD 7 seats

Price: £65,025

Mechanical: 200 bhp & 350 Nm (258 lb/ft) motor, 99.8 kWh battery

Max Speed: 114 mph

0 – 62 mph: 9.4secs

Range: 272 miles

Insurance Group: 45

C02 emissions: Zero

Bik rating: 2%, £ZeroFY, £ZeroSR

Warranty: 7 years mechanical 8 years battery/ 100,000 miles

Size: L 5.01 m (16.44 ft), W 1.98 m (6.50 ft), H 1.76 m (5.77 ft)

Bootspace: 333 to 2,318 litres (11.76 to 81.86 cu.ft)

Kerbweight: 2,501 kg (5,514 ft)

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