Kia goes from strength to strength with a wide variety of models

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Kia goes from strength to strength with a wide variety of models

Kim meets Kias…

Kim Henson samples four Kia models from the current range – and is impressed.

There are many good reasons why Kia is enjoying sales success in the U.K. These include the firm’s famous, market-leading seven year warranty, the very wide range of models and propulsion types – including, of course, hybrid and fully electric systems, and the fact that buyers like the vehicles!

Recently, during a north Wiltshire-based Kia driving event for members of the Western Group of Motoring Writers, I had the opportunity of sampling cars from across the Kia line-up. I should add that there are many more models that I didn’t have time to drive on the day, but Kia’s UK website shows the full array of their cars.

Here’s how my driving day went…

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Picanto 2



I started my day in the smallest model in Kia's extensive portfolio, the Picanto. Kias bearing the Picanto name have been produced for 20 years now, and the model has gained friends around the world for its user-friendly practicality, reliability and economy.

The Picanto line-up starts with the '1' version, priced at £13,665 and specification levels rise through 1,2,3, GT-Line, X-Line S and GT-Line S grades.

I drove the '2' version, costing £14,415 on the road and with an impressive level of standard equipment in addition to a raft of state-of-the-art safety systems. Aluminium alloy road wheels, front and rear electric windows, air conditioning and a height-adjustable driver's

seat are examples of items within the standard specification.



Within the five door hatchback body shell are four seats (as in all Picantos except the five seater X-Line S), with those in the front being generously proportioned and offering good head and leg room. The rear seats don’t provide a huge amount of leg room, but of course the Picanto is a compact vehicle.



The luggage compartment has a reasonable capacity, especially bearing in mind the overall size of the car.

Driving the Picanto via the front wheels is a three cylinder petrol engine developing 66 bhp, which I found provided willing, lively performance (especially at higher rpm). It is also a smooth, quiet-running unit, becoming a bit more audible when accelerating under load/hill climbing, but the sound was not intrusive.



I liked the slick, easy gearchange action of the five speed manual gearbox, and at 60 mph in the overdrive top (fifth) ratio, the tachometer needle was indicating approximately 2,000

rpm.

While on the subject of instrumentation, the gauge readouts are models of clarity; all the information is easy to assimilate.



My co-driver and I were impressed by the support and comfort provided by the front seats and the car's commendable ride quality. The MacPherson front strut/rear trailing arm suspension coped easily with less than perfect tarmac – and we also both commented favourably on the way in which the Picanto handled the twisting roads on our test route.

The steering (with column motor electric assistance) felt nicely-weighted and the car was easy to turn and to park in tight spaces.

The official ‘Combined’ fuel consumption figure is 58.9 miles per gallon, and during my test drive, the dash readout indicated better than 49 mpg overall (including a lot of ‘hill’ work) – so the car promises to be inexpensive on fuel.

Picanto ‘2’ Verdict

A very likeable compact hatchback, which should be enjoyable to own and live with, while being relatively easy on your wallet too.



FAST FACTS – Picanto ‘2’

Price, as tested: £14,415

1.0 litre three cylinder petrol engine (66 bhp at 5,500 rpm, 130 Nm or 96 lb.ft at 3,750 rpm)

Acceleration: 0 – 62 mph, 14.1 seconds

Top speed: 100 mph

Combined fuel consumption (official figure): 58.9 mpg (on test, 49+ mpg)

CO2 emissions: 110 g/km

Overall Length: 3,595 mm (11.79 ft)

Overall Width: 1,595 mm (5.23 ft)

Overall height: 1,485 mm (4.87 ft)

Luggage capacity: Rear seats up/folded: 255/1,010 litres (9.01/35.67 cu.ft)

Kerb Weight: 974 kg (2,147 lb)

Soul EV ‘Explore’ (64 KWh)



From the petrol-powered Picanto I stepped into the ‘pure electric’ Soul EV ‘Explore’, this distinctive SUV being driven by a permanent magnet synchronous electric motor, linked to a 64 KWh Li-on polymer battery. Power output is 64KWh or 202 bhp (‘Urban’ versions are rated at 39.2 KWh or 134 bhp).



The all-electric set-up on the test car is said to provide a city range of 402 miles, and a ‘Combined’ range on a full battery charge of 280 miles.

Priced at £39,045 this version of the Soul (the ‘Urban’ model costs £32,845) is a comprehensively-equipped, versatile family vehicle, with generous interior space and a large capacity for luggage.



During my test drive it was a comfortable car in which to travel, with accommodating seats, a smooth, controlled ride quality and near-silent progress at all speeds.

I am not going to attempt to list all the standard equipment that comes with the ‘Explore’, but some of the highlights include black leather upholstery, roof rails, heated front seats and steering wheel, power adjustment for the driver’s seat, a 10.25 inch touch screen with satellite navigation, rain-sensing front wipers, rear parking sensors and special sports wheels.



The all-electric drivetrain (engaged via an easy-to-use rotary control mounted on the centre console) propelled the Soul very rapidly when required, and hill-climbing was a breeze during my test drive, which included some fast sections of main road as well as meandering country lanes. Acceleration from rest and when on the move was rapid and yet the car was very controllable and docile when in heavy traffic situations. Cruising at high road speeds was relaxing and quiet – and the drivetrain was turbine-like in its smoothness.



Charging time for the battery pack is quoted by Kia as being from 47 minutes using a 100 kW DC fast charger, to boost the battery from 10 to 80 per cent of charge capacity, to 29 hours using a 230 volt/12 Amp system, to go from zero to 100 per cent charge.

Soul EV ‘Explore’ Verdict

Highly enjoyable to drive, with plenty of space for passengers and luggage, and with a usefully long range with a fully-charged battery.



FAST FACTS – Soul EV ‘Explore’

Price, as tested: £39,045

64 kWh (201 bhp between 3,800 and 8,000 rpm; 395 Nm or 291 lb.ft torque from 0 to 3,600 rpm) permanent magnet synchronous electric motor.

Battery: 64 kWh Li-on polymer

Acceleration: 0 – 62 mph, 7.9 seconds

Top speed: 104 mph

Quoted mileage range: City, 402 miles, ‘Combined’, 280 miles

Overall Length: 4,195 mm (13.76 ft)

Overall Width: 1,800 mm (5.91 ft)

Overall height: 1,605 mm (5.27 ft)

Luggage capacity, seats up/folded: 315/1,339 litres (11.12/47.29 cu.ft)

Kerb Weight: 1,758 kg (3,876 lb)

EV6 ‘GT-Line S’ 77.4 kWh AWD



More pure electric motoring for me during my next drive, in the multi-award-winning EV6. My test car on this occasion was the GT-Line S' 77.4 kWh AWD version, delivering 321 bhp plus 605 Nm (446 lb.ft) torque from its twin motors. Power is fed to the tarmac via a single speed automatic transmission plus all wheel drive system.

It's a futuristic-looking vehicle, resulting from collaboration between Kia's worldwide network in Namyang, Korea, Frankfurt in Germany and Irvine in California.



The interior features a ‘floating’ type centre console, and incorporates twin 12.3 inch dashboard touch screens.



This EV6 has a wide variety of standard-fit safety and convenience systems, with multi-aspect connectivity high on the list of features. The list is too long to include here but among the many notable features are this car's Meridian premium 14 speaker sound system, 360 degree 'Around view monitor' (very useful!), blind spot view monitor (also very good) built-in satellite navigation system, 20-inch aluminium alloy road wheels, 'paddle' gear shifters, tilt and telescopic steering wheel adjustment, and so on and so on.

Available performance is very impressive, and just one indication is the zero to 62 mph standing start acceleration time of just 5.2 seconds. However, that's just part of the story, since on-the-move acceleration is commendably rapid too, and importantly, aided by

excellent brakes and responsive steering, the car felt sure-footed in all the situations I encountered, including leaf-strewn damp roads in places.

The comfort provided by the seats and the MacPherson strut front plus multi-link rears suspension was appreciated by me and also by my co-driver motoring writer. There is plenty of room for front and rear seat occupants, and the boot is ‘vast’.

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The ‘City’ driving range on a fully-charged battery is said to be 391 miles, with 300 miles available using the more representative/realistic ‘Combined’ rating.

These positive figures are aided by the large capacity 77.4 kWh battery, the charging times for which are said to range between 18 minutes (10 to 80 per cent) and 73 minutes (10 to 80 per cent) for DC fast charges, and between 7 hours 20 minutes (10 to 100 per cent) and 32 hours 45 minutes (10 to 100 per cent), using AC charging.

VERDICT

Fun to drive, spacious, comfortable and with a usefully long driving range, this is a state of the art fully electric car that looks good and feels very well engineered.



FAST FACTS – EV6 77.4kWh ‘GT-Line S’ AWD

Price, as tested: £56,245

Twin permanent magnet synchronous electric motors (321 bhp at 6,800 to 9.200 rpm, 605 Nm or 446 lb.ft at Zero to 4,400 rpm), driving through single speed automatic transmission.

Battery: 77.4 kWh Li-on polymer, 384 cells, nominal voltage 697, capacity 111.2 Ah, weight 477.1 kg (1,052 lb).

Acceleration: 0 – 62 mph, 5.2 seconds

Top speed: 114 mph

City driving range: 391 miles

‘Combined’ range: 300 miles

Overall Length: 4,695 mm (15.40 ft)

Overall Width: 1,890 mm (6.20 ft)

Overall height: 1,550 mm (5.09 ft)

Luggage capacity, seats up/folded: 480/1,300 litres (16.95/45.91 cu.ft)

Kerb Weight: 2,090 kg (4,608 lb)

Ceed ‘2’ 1.5 T-GDi



Back to petrol power for my last drive of the day, in a Ceed ‘2’ priced at £22,565. This is the ‘entry level’ model in the Ceed line-up, but there is no shortage of equipment in this five door hatchback that is packed with practical features and provides cost-effective motoring in an attractive package.

Standard kit includes 16 inch aluminium alloy road wheels, a six speaker audio system, manual seat height adjustment for the driver, a leather-trimmed steering wheel, air conditioning, eight-inch touchscreen audio display (but no sat nav), a reversing camera system and multiple connectivity features.

The Ceed has recently undergone some restyling attention at the front of the car, which is a spacious five door, five seater hatchback that many will find ideal for family motoring. Not everyone wants, nor can afford, an electric vehicle so petrol propulsion is the order of the day in this Ceed.

Under the bonnet is a 1.5 litre four cylinder engine, developing 158 bhp at 5,500 rpm, and, importantly, maximum torque of 253 Nm (187 lb.ft) all the way from 1,500 to 3,500 rpm. This endows the car with plenty of low speed pulling power and helps make it a pleasure to drive, even in town traffic and hilly districts, with a minimum of gearchanging required. Not that changing gear is onerous, for the six speed manual change transmission in the test car had a slick, quick gearchange – first rate.



I found the car to be fun to drive, with plenty of power for both open road and country district driving, as well as urban use, already mentioned.

The engine was an eager performer, and acceleration both from rest (nought to 62 mph in 8.4 seconds) and on the move was commendably rapid.

When cruising at motorway speeds the Ceed ran quietly and felt mechanically refined.

The Ceed handled well too, on a variety of fast, twisting main roads and in country lanes with very tight turns.

The interior looks and feels well-made, and the front seats proved to be comfortable for myself and co-driver, admittedly during a relatively short test drive, but I am sure that they would feel just as good on longer trips. On my test drive the MacPherson strut/multi-link suspension system provided a compliant ride quality too.



Rear seat leg room isn’t huge, but adequate for up to three adults to travel in reasonable comfort.



Mention should be made of the large luggage compartment – it's wide, deep and long (with a 60/40 rear seat folding facility, to aid practicality), and perfect for family travel requirements.



VERDICT

Competent, cost-effective, versatile. With an on-the-road price of less than £23,000, in today's market the Ceed, which I feel is a very good car, represents excellent value for money. For those seeking even more features, there are more comprehensively-equipped versions, with prices running up to just over £26, 000 (GT-Line starts at £25,565; Ceed '3' from £26.065). (If you require even more space than the hatchback offers, there's a Ceed Sportswagon version available too, priced from £23,625 for the '2' version and from £26,765 for the '3' variant).



FAST FACTS – Ceed ‘2’ 1.5 T-GDi

Price, as tested: £22,565

1.5 litre four cylinder petrol engine (158 bhp at 5,500 rpm, 253 Nm or 187 lb.ft torque at 1,500 to 3,500 rpm).

Acceleration: 0 – 62 mph, 8.4 seconds

Top speed: 130 mph

Combined fuel consumption (official figure): 51.4 mpg

CO2 emissions: 125 g/km

Overall Length: 4,315 mm (14.16ft)

Overall Width: 1,800 mm (5.91 ft)

Overall height: 1,447 mm (4.75 ft)

Luggage capacity, seats up/folded: 395/1,291 litres (13.95/45.59 cu.ft)

Kerb Weight: 1,330 kg (2,932 lb)