Kia pro_cee’d 1.6 T-GDI GT Hatchback

Published: September 14, 2016

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Online version: https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/kia-pro_ceed-1-6-t-gdi-gt-hatchback/



Hot-to-Trot – The Latest Kia pro_cee’d 1.6 T-GDI GT Hatchback.

Reviewed by David Miles (Miles Better News Agency).

The uprated Kia 1.6 T-GDi GT 201 bhp hot hatch is available with three and five door body styles in the pro_cee’d three door and five door cee’d ranges priced at £23,110 and £23,610

respectively.

The two Kia ‘hot’ hatchbacks nestle in the region of ‘warm’ performance versions of conventional family hatchbacks rather than the outright road burners such as Ford Focus RS, VW Golf R, Audi RS3, Honda Civic Type R and the Mercedes A45 AMG. The competition is more likely the Focus ST, Golf GTi, Skoda Octavia vRS, Peugeot 308 GT, SEAT Leon Cupra and Renault Mégane GT.

The latest cee’d GTs have a revised 1.6 litre T-GDi direct injection twin-scroll turbocharger petrol engine which develops 201 bhp at 6,000rpm. Most importantly the 265 Nm (195.5 lb.ft) of torque is now developed from 1,500 rpm right through to 4,500 rpm, giving it a wider powerband. Previously maximum torque was developed from 1,750 rpm. This change makes the engine far more responsive more or less completely through the acceleration range. It is also very flexible for driving at slower in-traffic speeds without the need to constantly change gears to keep the engine in its ‘happy zone’. Top speed is a healthy 143 mph and zero to 60 mph takes a spritely 7.3 seconds. Perhaps a downside is that this engine is only available with a six-speed manual gearbox rather than the newer twin-clutch automatic transmissions.



Officially this engine in the pro_cee'd three door version I tried returns 38.2 mpg in the Combined Cycle with CO2 emissions of a high 170 g/km. My week-long test driving covering all types of roads and traffic conditions returned 33.2 mpg. The high-ish, in this class, CO2 figure means that VED road tax is £300 for the First Year rate reducing to £210 for following years. Company car drivers would be lumbered with a 31% level of Benefit-in-Kind tax and insurance is rated as Group 26A. The transferable seven-year/100,000-mile warranty should enhance residual values.

The latest changes to the pro_cee'd GT included a significant price increase of over £2,000 but the vehicle, like its five-door cee'd GT stablemate, has moved upmarket with more kit, improved sportier styling and of course the uprated engine. The one GT trim and equipment level includes new front and rear bumpers, a rear diffuser, side sill skirts, a sports tuned

suspension and uprated discs brakes – moving from 16 to 17 inch ones with red calipers, 18-inch alloy wheels, ice-cube LED daytime running lights, cornering lights, automatic xenon headlights, auto wipers, a more refined version of Kia's 'tiger nose' grille with a wide air intake grille beneath it. The side profile with its steeply rising waistline gives the coupé an athletic appearance and neatly links to the steeply angled rear tailgate. Overall the changes improve the GT versions to a sharp-looking sports hatchback. It certainly has that all-important kerb appeal.



Inside the upgrades to a much higher level of quality continue with heated part-leather upholstered Recaro front sports seats, the first use for Kia of a flat-bottomed multi-function sports steering wheel which includes a GT button that changes the driving modes as well as sending a an artificially synthesised engine note into the cabin. Also included is a seven-inch infotainment touchscreen with sat-nav and rear view camera, Bluetooth, DAB radio, on-board computer, dual zone air-con, heated steering wheel, stainless steel pedals, leather trimmed handbrake, front electric windows, gear-shift indicator, lots of polished trim inserts and chrome trimmed surrounds for the air vents plus 60/40 split folding rear seats. With the rear seats in place the boot has a capacity of 380 litres (13.42 cu.ft) and with all the rear seat backs folded this goes up to 1,225 litres (43.26 cu.ft). My only comment is the rear sill is higher than the load floor so heavy items have to be lifted over the sill and down into the boot and the boot opening shape is not the most convenient. My three door pro_cee'd version is not the most user-friendly for accommodating rear seat passengers. Headroom is good, legroom reasonable but access into the seats was difficult so I would pay the extra £500 for the convenience the five door GT version offers.





Is the pro_cee'd as good as it looks? It really depends on whether you want difficult to live with and difficult to resist hard-core performance from your family sized hatchback. If you don't want that the pro_cee'd and cee'd GTs are worthy of consideration. There is enough performance to brighten your driving day and plenty of equipment to enjoy, all wrapped up in an eye-catching sports body design.

The turbocharged petrol engine felt strong under acceleration, benefitting from the useful amount of torque from a lower level of rpm engine speed, and the slick six-speed manual gearbox was nice to use – and on the open roads it cruised effortlessly. The fuel economy was not that great and the CO2 emissions are relatively high so running costs need to be considered.

Despite its 'sports' label the sports suspension was still able to provide a more comfortable ride than most of its competitors. The steering was well-weighted and precise with the body control and chassis dynamics coping easily with the extra performance by limiting understeer and generally providing a flat pitch-free and roll-free ride.

VERDICT

Overall I found the car met my expectations but in the end in this 'hot-hatch' market it really depends on what your expectations are. If it is downright aggression and a hard-as-nails ride, then it would not be for you. If however you want a bit more performance than a

standard model, a comfortable ride, a high level of driving aids in a nice good quality interior, with plenty of exterior kerb appeal, it is a smile-making car and on the right roads a rewarding one to drive briskly or leisurely.

For: Sports styling with desirable kerb appeal, high specification, good quality interior, comfortable ride, sharp handling, long warranty.

Against: Not as speedy as a Golf GTi or Focus ST, not as fuel or as CO2 efficient as some of its competitors so high running costs, no auto transmission option, limited access for rear seat passengers so go for the £500 extra cost five door cee’d GT model, difficult pro_cee’d name.



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

Kia pro_cee’d 1.6 T-GDi GT, 3-door manual. Price: £23,110.

Engine: 1.6 litre, four cylinder turbocharged direct injection petrol, 201 bhp, 265 Nm (195.5 lb.ft) of torque from 1,500 rpm.

Transmission: Six speed manual.

Performance:

0-60 mph: 7.3 seconds.

Top speed: 143 mph.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 38.2 mpg (32.2 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 170 g/km, VED road tax £300/£210, BIK company car tax 31%.

Insurance Group: 26A.

Warranty (transferable): Seven years/100,000 miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,310 mm (14.14 ft), W 1,780 mm (5.84 ft), H 1,430 mm (4.69 ft), boot/load space 380 – 1,225 litres (13.42 – 43.26 cu.ft), three doors/five seats.