Kia Sorento 4 1.6T Hybrid AWD large SUV – Road Test

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Author: Robin Roberts

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The Kia Sorento 4 is full of surprises in a market which often delivers nothing out of the ordinary, *writes Robin Roberts (and Miles Better Motoring*).

I mean; what car comes with a beach, a wood-burner, a café or its own forest? They are part of the “nat sounds” available in the highly sophisticated infotainment system and are a calming or relaxing influence in a car which is already in the lowest stress sector of driving.

The Sorento 4 tested is the top of the three trim levels in this large seven-seat SUV launched last year with petrol or diesel engines and self-charging battery and which was joined earlier this year by a plug-in hybrid powertrain as well.



Our 1.6 litre turbo petrol is the latest low emissions engine from Kia and when combined with a beefy 44.2 kW electric motor and 1.49 kWh lithium-ion polymer battery it can deliver up to 226 hp.



Mated to a slick, smooth and quiet six-speed automatic transmission with selectable modes to optimise economy or performance, the powertrain is remarkable and highly efficient.

There’s always a gear for the conditions whether ambling along in town and country or pushing on for more urgent needs and here I must mention the clear rear-facing overtaking and undertaking cameras which activate when the indicators are used.



The petrol engine provides good performance with instant acceleration helped by the electric motor, is quiet until it heads towards maximum revs and combined with the self-charging electric power returned a very creditable 40 mpg during our test, a figure which would have seemed impossible just a few years ago for anything but a noisy and clunky diesel in a seven-seater family car.

Underfoot it slows and stops with modest gradual pedal pressure and total control, securely holds on a hill and moves away again while the steering imparts good feedback even if the turning circle is not compact for urban streets and parking.

The Sorento’s front strut and rear multi-link suspension would not be out of place under a sports car and gives the large family carry-all some good handling aided by its all-wheel-drive, in great comfort. That said, the two rearmost seats in the third row really are suitable only for children with short leg and headroom.

Behind them the boot is about mid-thigh height, flat and sensibly shaped with good capacity

even before you gradually start raising the volume by systematically dropping the backrests.



For driver and passengers, it’s very easy to climb up and into the cabin, with lots of space in row 1 and row 2 , and some of the most comfortable seats I’ve enjoyed in a long time. The front pair has lots of powered adjustment range and you can select the reach on the middle row as well. Climbing into row 3 is a faff but fun for kids.

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Once inside the low waistline and big windows give good sightlines and vision with big quick acting wipers, powerful washers both ends and at night a really bright set of long-range and widespread beams.

So you really feel safe and secure in the Sorento, sitting up high, in comfort and a cabin

climate system that is easily variable but always refreshing.

Some care is needed when reversing but the sensors and camera are a big help and very clearly show what's around you.

VERDICT

On the move you have a responsive chassis and powertrain with excellent roadholding and a very smooth ride as the suspension soaks up all manner of holes and humps.

Tight corners can induce some body roll if taken at speed and you are always aware of how hard the suspension is working judged by the modest tyre and road noises.

Otherwise, the Sorento 4 is extremely luxurious and insulating, putting me in mind of 4x4s costing twice the price but delivering a lot less in sophistication with a shorter warranty and that is another surprise which puts the Sorento 4 ahead of most rivals and explains why it has picked up a brace of awards.

For: Very refined and sophisticated, excellent comfort, delightfully smooth powertrain, highly practical family SUV, long warranty.

Against: Punitive taxation, very little third-row legroom, some road and engine noises, body roll on tight corners, boxy shape.



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

Kia Sorento 4 Hybrid AWD 7-seat SUV.

Price: £47,210.

Mechanical: 226 bhp, 4-cylinder, 1,598cc turbo-petrol, 6-speed Auto, AWD.

Performance: 119 mph, 0 – 62 mph 8.7 seconds, 40 mpg overall on test, CO2 169 g/km.

Tax costs: First Year VED £545, Standard rate with the over £40k price penalty £480 annually for 5 years.

Insurance Group: 34.

Warranty: 7 years/100,000 miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4.81 m (15.78 ft), W 1.90 m (6.23 ft), H 1.70 m (5.58 ft), 5-doors/7-seats, boot space 608 – 1,996 litres (21.47 – 70.49 cu.ft), kerb weight: 2006 kg (4,422 lb).