



Kia Sorento HEV 2 – Road Test

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The motor trade and industry has had a bad year, but you'd not know it from sales of Kia models including their big seven-seat Sorento SUV, writes Robin Roberts (and WheelsWithinWales).

While rivals have rushed to shrink their ranges and look only towards pure electric models which we know are coming over the decade, Kia has slowly and very carefully tweaked its line up so they still offer potentially something for every customer who walks into a showroom or surfs the internet.

Petrol, diesel, mild-hybrid, plug-in hybrid and battery models are dotted throughout one of the biggest model ranges of any manufacturer.

Change is around the corner but Kia has kept its eyes on the road ahead, anticipated demand and its responses to global sales opportunities.

President-elect Donald Trump is widely expected to rollback on greener cars from the New Year when he takes office and this will upset the established plans of makers who have drawn up worldwide sales plans drafted without internal combustion engines using petrol or diesel.

It will be interesting to see how the global industry shakes out with this expect U-turn in America and the anti-Chinese tariffs now coming into effect across Europe alongside the UK's additional levy on all makers who fail to sell 22% of their models with electric motors under their bonnets this year.



Kia has played the long-game very well since entering the UK market in 1991, and widened its range to meet demand, so it was not until 2002 that the Sorento slipped into the large MPV or more recently the SUV sector.

Even today, the MY25 cars look like the MY24 models but under their bonnets and floors new powertrains are fitted, unless you opt for the still available, trailer-loving diesel models which have been retained for really high mileage users who need to have minimum annual service downtime and want to cover ground without waiting to recharge, or regularly pull trailers of any sort. It's a wise decision which will bring new buyers into dealerships when competitors cannot match this sort of performance.

We tested a MY25 Sorento diesel this summer and were impressed and eagerly awaited the half-way mild-hybrid petrol, the subject of this review.

Sorento is available with four-wheel-drive in three grades: '2', '3' and '4' with the choice of 190 bhp 2.2-litre diesel, 212 bhp 1.6-litre turbocharged-petrol hybrid (HEV), or a 249 bhp 1.6-litre turbocharged-petrol plug-in hybrid (PHEV). With the choice of standard or premium paint finishes that's an 18-model range.

The HEV and PHEV Sorento variants are equipped with a 6-speed automatic transmission, while diesel models receive an 8-speed dual-clutch transmission.

New Sorento starts from £41,995 in the UK, £3,030 less than the outgoing model, and rises through the grades and nine available models to £56,670.

Our 2-grade, entry level test car had automatic intelligent LED lights, powered and heated door mirrors, rain sensing wipers, heated wheel and front seats with automatic air conditioning throughout, 12.3-inch touchscreen including navigation and mobile phone compatibility, multi-charging ports throughout and 7 year Kia Connect services, parking sensors and rear camera, intelligent cruise control and driving assistance systems.

Four years after the last version was introduced, the new Sorento has been aligned with



Kia's newer SUV models, fully embracing Kia's 'Opposites United' design philosophy.

The latest Kia Sorento uses artificial leather and recycled PET cloth throughout the cabin and upholstery, a further implication of Kia's sustainability mission.

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All Sorento models receive front centre airbags, side and curtain front airbags, all-round three-point seatbelts, impact-sensing auto door unlocking, 2nd row grab handle, ISOFIX child seat top tethers and anchor fixings in the 2nd and 3rd row, child lock, immobiliser, locking wheel nuts, a visible VIN and a Thatcham Category 1 alarm system.

So the HEV 2 is equipped to a very high standard which unfortunately pushed it nearly £3,000 into the higher road tax band and it came without a powered tailgate or front facing camera which some may desire.

But the fact is the hard and software under the bonnet really do a good job as the 83 bhp electric motor comes in when started and as necessary afterwards to reduce emissions and noise while raising economy along with the 129 bhp petrol engine.

They work almost seamlessly together delivering very useable power with creamy changes from the six-speed automatic transmission and delivering power to the road or rough track in grip modes selected by the driver varying from sporting to snow conditions. Unexpectedly having to use a narrow country lane diversion after a main road accident and encountering oncoming cars we were able to ease onto the wide grass verge and let the system pull us through the muddy surface without a problem or any wheelspin. You never know when all wheel drive can be useful.

Back on road, acceleration was respectably brisk, fairly quiet and it cruised without complaint on a motorway and main road, returning consumption in line with WLTP data.

Power steering gave good feedback and was vibration-free, it was well weighted but I would



have liked a tighter turning circle when parking.

Brakes were well up to their task with gentle pedal pressure returning good slowing and stopping ability and the parking brake did a good job of holding the near two-tonnes car on a slope and coming off the moment the throttle was depressed.

Secondary controls and switches were well placed, well marked and worked satisfactorily with good sized selectable instruments in front of the driver and a very big central fascia touchscreen for infotainment, navigation, communications and settings. Sensibly, the climate and output controls as well as rear screen heating were on separate controls beneath the fascia and they worked precisely as desired.





Powered windows all round and many vents kept the interior comfortable but there was no sunroof in our trim.

Oddments room was good for a family car with big trays, door bins and console compartment along with seatback pockets.

In usual five-seat set up the boot space was a capacious 813 litres (28.71 cu.ft) but it shrank under 180 litres (6.36 cu.ft) if the third-row dual seats were lifted out of the loadbed floor, before jumping to nearly 2,000 litres (70.63 cu.ft) in two-seat use. It was not easy to get into the rearmost seats and space was tight when you did.



Otherwise, boot and cabin access was very good if a bit of a climb up or drop down, seats were extremely comfortable with plenty of adjust and support for a long journey with a typical family. Suspension was very compliant and smooth.

They enjoy a high riding position with excellent visibility, there are good wipers both ends and bright wide spread headlights with auto-dip setting, big door mirrors and overtaking alerts.

The driver has a good range of column adjustment to use and a comprehensive suite of safety features should ensure an accident free trip avoiding speeding as well.

On road the handling was good and it did not roll very much around bends or tend to plough



on through sharp corners while its pitch and dipping was barely noticeable either.

You become aware of its size in narrow lanes or easing into parking bays but on the move it's not so apparent because it responds quickly and undramatically to steering, throttle and brake pedals.

VERDICT

The Kia Sorento HEV is an attractive model to consider for a family.

For: Excellent ride and handling, very smooth powertrain, well equipped, economical, roomy for five with adjustable reach middle row seating giving good bootspace, clear instruments and infotainment, very long warranty.

Against: Very small nominal boot, awkward third row access and short legroom, average performance, expensive to tax, no powered tailgate or sunroof on 2-grade test car.

FAST FACTS

Model: Kia Sorento HEV 2

Price: £42,995

Mechanical: 212 bhp 1598cc 4cyl petrol engine, 6 speed auto

Max Speed: 113 mph

0 - 62 mph: 9.7 secs

Combined MPG: 42

Insurance Group: 25E



C02 emissions: 153 g/km

Bik rating: 35%, £670FY, £590SRx5

Warranty: 7 years/ 100,000 miles

Rating: 4/ 5

Size: L 4.82 m (15.81 ft), W 1.90m (6.23 ft) , H 1.70m (5.58 ft)

Bootspace: 179 to 1,996 litres (6.32 to 70.49 cu.ft)

Kerbweight: 1,959 kg (4,319 lb)