



Kia Soul Urban EV – Road Test

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The all-new, all-electric KIA Soul Urban EV – Robin Roberts (and Miles Better News Agency) was fully charged up for his test drive report...

KIA new car sales are soaring in Britain and to keep ahead it has seemingly taken a step back with the latest generation of the popular Soul EV priced at £32,845, the price of our



test car, and ranging up to £39,790.

KIA Soul was first launched in 2008 after the company looked to its Californian styling studio for a new model to appeal to the 18-35 year old American buyer market and its concept creation debuted at the Detroit motor show in 2006.

The production model broke cover at the 2008 Paris Motor Show but a completely new second generation with larger proportions was shown in New York and Frankfurt motor shows in 2013 and went on sale the following year with the first generation EV powertrain added shortly afterwards.

The third generation petrol or electric powered KIA Soul models appeared from 2019 but the pandemic affected their launch in Britain. Now the push is on to ramp up registrations of the latest KIA Soul EV and it comes as KIA Charge connection system for owners passes 30,000 power points including almost 1,000 rapid chargers over 100 kW.

Today's Soul EV is available with a choice of new 39.2 kWh Urban battery as tested here for those who do not venture far on a regular basis, or the familiar 64 kWh Explore battery, both charging up to 80% capacity or close to 140 miles range in around three-quarters of an hour.

KIA has retained the upright, boxy profile of the second generation Soul to maximise head and luggage room within the overall dimensions but the third series now has the latest slim LED units front and back, with eye-catching body colours.

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Inside, appealing to music lovers, there are new tweeter speakers, and 8 or 10.25-inch floating touchscreens for infotainment, navigation, smartphone integration for calls and music, system settings and a multi-mode display in front of the driver.



There is the latest driver assistance, safety and convenience features together with intelligent cruise control, reversing camera and parking sensors.

Introducing the Urban model intended for those not requiring covering long distances on a regular basis means that while not lacking the specification expected of a modern family car, the costs are being kept down as only a rapid charge-box cable is provided in the same way as one rival to the Soul EV.

However it does mean an owner who wants to charge at home for short trips must install a smart-box charger, discounted at KIA dealers, unless they purchase an aftermarket three-pin cable for about £200. But are owners prepared to take a risk if there is an issue with that which leads to damaging the car or property and would not be covered under KIA or



home insurance? Dealers can supply KIA's 3-pin mains cable but it's over £600.

With its decade of experience building electric vehicles, KIA has developed a very good Urban model, even if it's taking a step back from the current trend towards extending range with cabled cars.



Starting and moving the Soul Urban is simply a matter of pressing a button and turning a rotary knob to go forwards or backwards and that's it. Transmission is automatic and the more you press the throttle the more volts flow through and accelerate the car.

It's a very smooth and mechanically quiet powertrain with selectable eco, normal or sport modes to maximise miles or performance as desired and there is a noticeable difference,



including increasing retardation regeneration to top up the charge still more.

Selecting which mode to use will immediately alter the display in front of the driver, essentially just speedometer and power meter to accentuate different aspects such as pulling power or economy, and they are of good size and fairly well marked.

Plugging in power is through a point behind a flap in the nose directly in front of the motor.

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It is possible to “dial-in” single foot operation using the retardation feature but even driven normally the footbrake is well up to the task and slows the car quickly and smoothly without drama.

The steering, although weighted towards lightness, gave good feedback and the turning circle was good for town use without being twitchy on sweeping roads.

Secondary controls on stalks were well laid out and close to fingertips, additional buttons on the wheel spokes operated the convenience features, communications and entertainment settings so you did not have to constantly look at the touchscreen.

The screen was big, clear and quick to change functions as selected, while the climate control was effective and easy to use.

Oddments room was good for a family car except it had only one seat back pocket in the back for some reason, but there were bins in the doors, a front glovebox of useful size, plus cubby and trays on the central console. The boot space had a very low lip, also a flat wide floor and would quickly expand capacity dropping the offset split rear seats, but in five-seat configuration it was not as large as some conventional hatchbacks.



Access was easy for users with wide opening doors, low sills, very good headspace and once inside the legroom was generous for everyone but elbow room would be cramped for three in the back. Seat and column adjustment was wide for a driver.

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Visibility was excellent all round with thin roof pillars, low glass waistline, very effective washers and wipers each end and at night the lights were reasonably bright as well.

Sensors each end and the reversing camera are almost unnecessary as a result.



A driver can very accurately place the Soul and turning or parking in town was no problem while open roads were covered with ease and as quickly or calmly as wanted, with good roadholding and responses to steering and brakes. The parking brake securely held it on a steep slope and slipped off as the car moved off. Easy peasy.

The ride quality was generally very smooth over all manner of roads thanks to the independent suspension all round, but you were occasionally jarred by deeper potholes or raised tarmac and the drumming from the tyres was probably the most noticeable source of noise with no mechanical or wind intrusion.

VERDICT

The KIA Soul Urban makes no pretence about what it is, a well put together modern family car, ideal for weekday commuting and weekend shopping or sporting trips.

It comes with the excellent long warranty pioneered by the brand which is probably just as well because this is a car you may want to hang onto and get value for money over a longer period.

If you need more range it may be worth considering the Explore version, but either would be a good choice depending on personal requirements.

For: Three modes for performance, very comfortable, excellent visibility, controls and instruments, surefooted handling.

Against: Road rumbles and suspension noises, short range restricts to mostly commuting journeys, tight for five with small boot as well and no three-pin charging cable as standard.



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FAST FACTS

Model: KIA Soul Urban EV

Price: £32,845

Mechanical: 134 bhp motor with 39.2 kWh battery, single speed, front wheel drive

Max Speed: 97 mph



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0 - 62 mph: 9.9 sec

Range: 130 to 170 miles

Insurance Group: 26

CO2 emissions: Zero

Tax costs: BiK rating 2%, VED £Zero road tax

Warranty: 7 years/100,000 miles inc battery and motor

Size: L 4.20 m (13.78 ft), W 1.80 m (5.91 ft), H 1.61 m (5.28 ft)

Bootspace: 315 to 1,339 litres (11.12 to 47.29 cu.ft)

Kerbweight: 1,610 kg (3,549 lb)