



Kias galore – briefly test driven in one day

Published: June 7, 2022

Author: Kim Henson

Online version: <https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/kias-galore-briefly-test-driven-in-one-day/>



Kim Henson samples the latest model range from the go-ahead firm of Kia...

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Kia's progress in the U.K. in recent years has been nothing short of sensational, with an ever-broadening line-up of cars offering 'something for everyone', from the compact Picanto to the sophisticated Sportage (mid-size) and Sorento (large) SUVs to the gloriously sporty Stinger, and with many other models in between. 'Electrification' is gathering pace within the line-up, so plug-in hybrid and fully electric propulsion abounds.

From a buyer's point of view, the seven year warranty offered by the company provides important peace of mind, especially for those planning on keeping their cars for a few years.

Recently I was able to test drive a selection of Kia's models, during brief test runs on the same day and within the same area, and in this case the event was based in north Wiltshire. Usually on such days the road conditions are similar too, but for this test day the tarmac was dry one minute and flooded the next, as a series of heavy showers did their worst.

I should mention at the outset that across the range, from my perspective the cars I drove looked and felt 'high quality', notably with neat interiors, crystal-clear instrumentation and commendable attention to detail throughout that was good to encounter.

Sorento '4' 1.6 PHEV T-GDi Auto AWD Seven Seater SUV



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My first drive of the day was in the latest version of the Sorento, which since late 2021 has been offered with a plug-in hybrid (PHEV or 'Plug-in Electric Vehicle) powertrain (the other options are petrol self-charging hybrid (226 bhp), and diesel (199 bhp)). This is Kia's first large PHEV SUV.

Three trim levels are available, '2', '3' and range-topping '4', as in the case of the test car I sampled.

Propelling the car is a 1.6 litre four cylinder petrol engine, developing 261 bhp plus 350 Nm (258 lb.ft) of torque and working in conjunction with a 67 kW (304 Nm or 224 lb.ft) electric



motor. The range on electric power is said to be 35 miles (more than 40 miles in city driving), and battery charging time varies from around 3.5 hours to 5 hours, depending on power/charger source.



Power is delivered to all four wheels via a six speed automatic transmission.

An interesting technical feature is the Exhaust Heat Recovery system, which uses heat from the petrol engine exhaust system to help speed up warming of the engine (thereby minimising emissions and fuel consumption).



Performance figures are impressive, with a CO2 rating of just 38 g/km, a zero to 62 mph acceleration time of 8.7 seconds and a potential top speed of 119 mph.

Safety features abound, as do 'luxury' aspects including Nappa leather upholstery, smart cruise control, etc, etc.

First impressions on taking the wheel were favourable, with a spacious, pleasantly-trimmed interior and a readily-assimilated instrument panel, which, notably, advises the driver regarding 'Charge', 'Eco' and 'Power' situations as driving conditions (and right foot application!) vary. I also liked the useful 'head up' display on the windscreen, immediately ahead of the driver, reporting the speed limit applicable and the actual speed of the vehicle, at all times.

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Leg and head room have been increased, compared with previous Sorentos, and generous for front and occupants of the centre row of seats; less so for those in the rearmost seats, although headroom has improved in this latest version, for the third row of seats.

With just five seats in use the easily-accessed luggage space is of a useful size; Kia says 809 litres (28.57 cu.ft).



I found that power delivery was smooth, instant and enjoyable, with seamless integration of the petrol and electric propulsion systems. The vehicle was also very quiet in operation, and the loudest sounds I could detect were from the tyres on the tarmac rather than mechanical aspects.

I didn't try the car on slippery surfaces but the all wheel drive system comes with a 'terrain' selection control, so that snow, mud and sand are catered for.

I liked the supple ride quality; the Sorento was smooth-riding over uneven sections of tarmac, and the car also felt stable on twisting country roads, for example.



VERDICT

A likeable, practical family car. At first glance it may seem pricey at £54,695, but this is a high quality vehicle, and represents good value alongside competitors in the 'premium' sector.

FAST FACTS – Sorento '4' 1.6 PHEV T-GDi Auto AWD Seven Seater SUV



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Price, as tested: £54,695

1.6 litre four cylinder petrol engine (261 bhp @ 5,500 rpm, 350 Nm or 258 lb.ft @ 1,500 to 4,000 rpm) plus 67 kW (304 Nm or 224 lb.ft) electric motor.

Battery: 13.8 kWh Li-on polymer

Acceleration: 0 – 62 mph, 8.9 seconds

Top speed: 119 mph



'Weighted' Combined fuel consumption (official figure): 176.6 mpg (note: you are unlikely to actually achieve this in real life!)

All-electric range: 35miles

CO2 emissions: 38 g/km

Overall Length: 4,810 mm (15.78 ft)

Overall Width: 1,900 mm (6.23 ft)

Overall height: 1,695 mm (5.56 ft)

Luggage capacity: 809 litres (28.57 cu.ft)

Kerb Weight: 2,099 kg (4,627 lb)

Towing capacity (braked trailer): 1,500 kg (3,307 lb)

Sportage 1.6 T-GDi GT-Line PHEV AWD



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Kia's much-praised latest Sportage (the fifth generation), which is slightly longer, wider and higher than its predecessors, was introduced early this year. Designed and developed specifically for the European market, it is available in PHEV (Plug-in Hybrid) versions, as well as petrol, mild-hybrid, hybrid and diesel models.

The Sportage (the first versions of which were introduced in 1995) is a vitally important model for Kia, being the company's best-seller in Britain, Europe and indeed around the globe. As I took to the wheel of the 1.6 T-GDi GT-Line PHEV All Wheel Drive variant, I was interested to see how the newcomer shapes up.



Kia says that the new PHEV variant is the most business-friendly Sportage so far, with the company car Benefit-in-Kind rate at eight per cent for the 2022/23 tax year – lower than most competitor offerings that are within the 12 per cent band.

To put the test car that I drove in perspective in the line-up, the range starts with the 'GT-Line' (as driven), rising through '3' and '4' trim levels to the range-topper 'GT-Line S'.

I liked the 'clean' appearance of the fascia, which incorporates state-of-the-art driver information systems and very clear instrumentation. I was also impressed by the smart-looking, uncluttered interior (with accommodating seating that I found comfortable) and



said to provide greater head and leg room than previous Sportage models. The luggage compartment is also larger than hitherto, and my own observations confirmed that it is wide, long and sensibly-shaped, also flat-floored at bumper height, so it can easily be loaded/unloaded and should prove practical in everyday family use.

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With 261 bhp on tap, performance was brisk, the car was quiet and the variation of delivery of power and torque between electric and petrol propulsion was seamless. I feel that a very useful feature is the ability to run on electric-only operation for up to 43 miles (WLTP system figure).

This is further than many rivals can manage and means that for local daily commuting (for example), this Sportage would only need to be plugged in for recharging perhaps once or twice per week (of course depending on use).

In theory the overall weighted fuel consumption figure is more than 250 miles per gallon, but in real life motoring this is unlikely to be achieved. That said, as with any plug-in hybrid, the optimum mileage per gallon overall requires the vehicle to be recharged when needed so that it can run on electricity as much as possible, rather than petrol.

The battery pack is located low down in the vehicle and between the axles, so is unobtrusive and aids weight distribution. The car comes with an on-board 7.2 kW charger, said to recharge its propulsion battery more quickly than is the case with many competitor models.

The hybrid powertrain means that 'range anxiety' is not an issue, and long journeys can be covered and enjoyed in a worry-free manner.

Power is delivered to the tarmac via a six speed automatic transmission and an all wheel drive system.

On a mixture of fast 'A' roads and winding country lanes, I was impressed by the Sportage's



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supple ride quality and its responsive, positive handling, with top class steering and braking performances.

VERDICT

Fun to drive, roomy, comfortable and promising to be relatively inexpensive to run. Not cheap, at more than £38,000 for the 'base' version (and well over £40,000 for higher grade models), but an effective SUV and, for company car drivers, providing a low rate of Benefit-in-Kind taxation.





FAST FACTS – Sportage 1.6 T-GDi GT-Line PHEV AWD

Price, as tested: £38,395

1.6 litre four cylinder petrol engine (261 bhp at 5,500 rpm, 350 Nm or 258 lb.ft at 1,500 to 4,000 rpm) plus 67 kW (304 Nm or 224 lb.ft) electric motor.

Battery: 13.8 kWh Li-on polymer

Acceleration: 0 – 62 mph, 7.9 seconds

Top speed: 119 mph

‘Weighted’ Combined fuel consumption (official figure): 252 mpg (note: you are unlikely to actually achieve this in real life!)

All-electric range: 43 miles

CO2 emissions: 25 g/km

Overall Length: 4,515 mm (14.81 ft)

Overall Width: 1,865 mm (6.12 ft)

Overall height: 1,645 mm (5.40 ft), or 1,650 mm (5.41 ft) with roof rack

Luggage capacity, seats up/folded: 540/1,715 litres (19.07/60.56 cu.ft)

Kerb Weight: 1,905 kg (4,200 lb)

Towing capacity (braked trailer): 1,350 kg (2,976 lb)



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Soul EV 'Maxx' 64 kWh



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Over the last few years, Kia's Soul has made many friends with buyers of this distinctive 'crossover', and since the summer of 2021 the state-of-the-art 'Soul EV Maxx' (replacing the 'First Edition') has been offered as a 'pure electric' battery-only powered vehicle. It is built in Gwangju, South Korea.

This fully electric Soul joins the EV6 and e-Niro in Kia's expanding line-up of 'electric only' models.

Driving the EV Maxx is a synchronous electric motor, which collects its power from a 64 kWh lithium-ion battery pack. Under WLTP 'Combined' assessment, this provides up to 280



miles of motoring on a full charge (and the range is claimed to be more than 400 miles in city driving). The battery is said to have 25 per cent greater cell-energy density than hitherto, using new generation battery chemistry.



Kia tells us that recharging the battery can be charged to 80 per cent of its capacity in just 54 minutes, using a 100 kW charger, or in 75 minutes, using a 50 kW unit. The Combined Charging System (CCS) DC fast charging set-up comes as standard.

The smart regeneration braking system, controlled by paddles close to the steering wheel, offers the driver four levels of power regeneration to operate when slowing the car, helping



to boost battery power.

Standard specification includes leather upholstery, heated front seats and steering wheel, comprehensive connectivity functions, a high grade audio system and 17 inch aluminium alloy road wheels. A 10.25in touch screen provides driver information and is used for the satellite navigation function.

As with previous Soul models I have driven, I liked the spacious interior (with good head and leg room for all occupants) and practical load compartment (there's an additional useful compartment beneath the boot floor, useful for accommodating charging cables and other items). I felt that ride comfort was commendable and handling excellent during my drive which took in a mixture of fast 'A' roads and winding 'B' roads, which included some steep hills, up and down.

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Performance is lively and during my test drive the car accelerated smoothly and quietly, as well as rapidly. Cruising at higher speeds was easily accomplished, and the drivetrain refinement was impressive. I also liked the manner in which this Soul EV romped up steep hills.

It is reassuring to see a useful driving range between charges, and with up to 280 miles available in mixed use (more than 400 in urban motoring), the Soul EV is far more practical for real life use than many other all-electric models.



VERDICT

If you are looking for a 'fully electric' (i.e. non-hybrid) family vehicle the Soul EV Maxx should be on your shortlist.

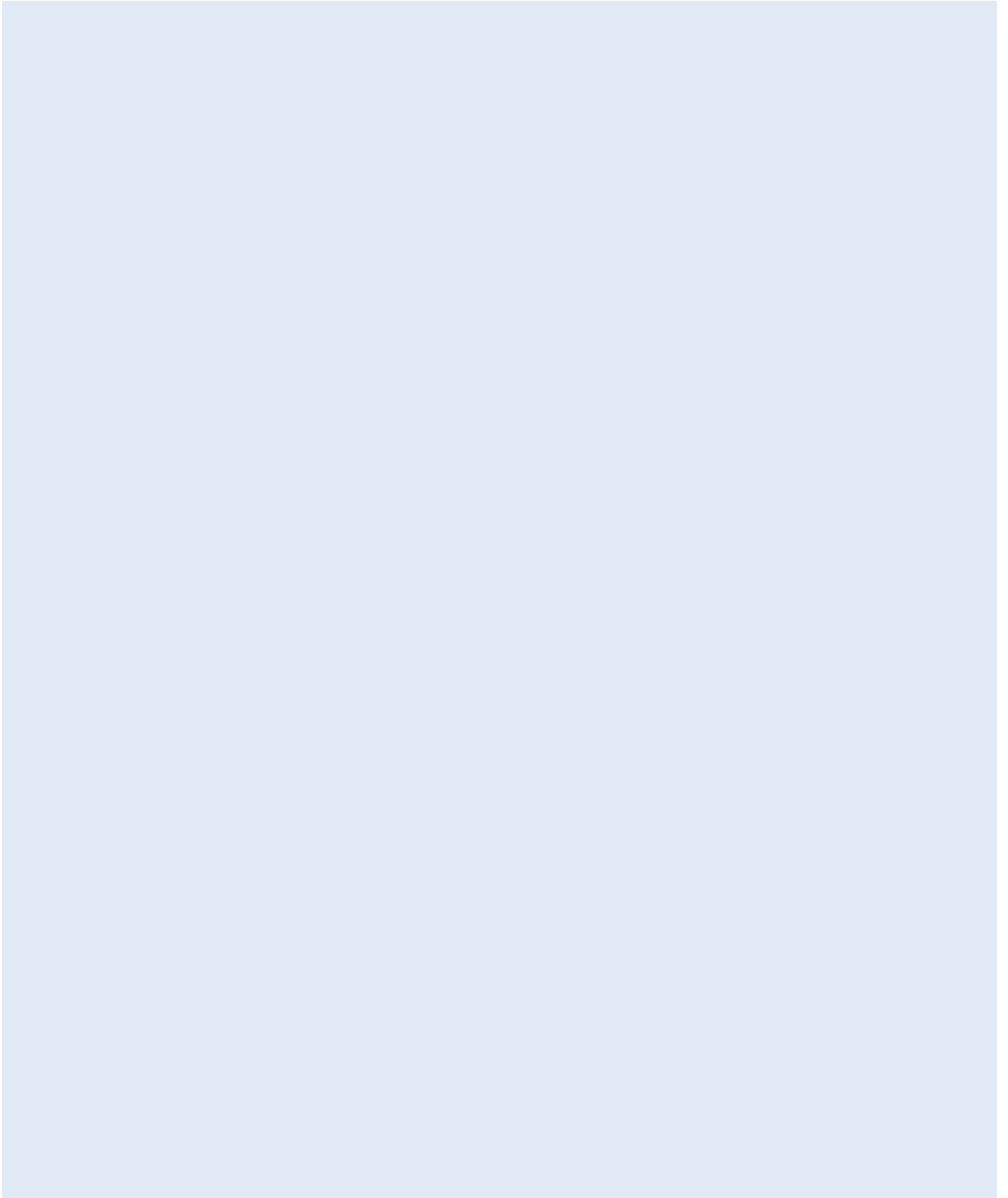


FAST FACTS – Soul EV 'Maxx' 64 kWh



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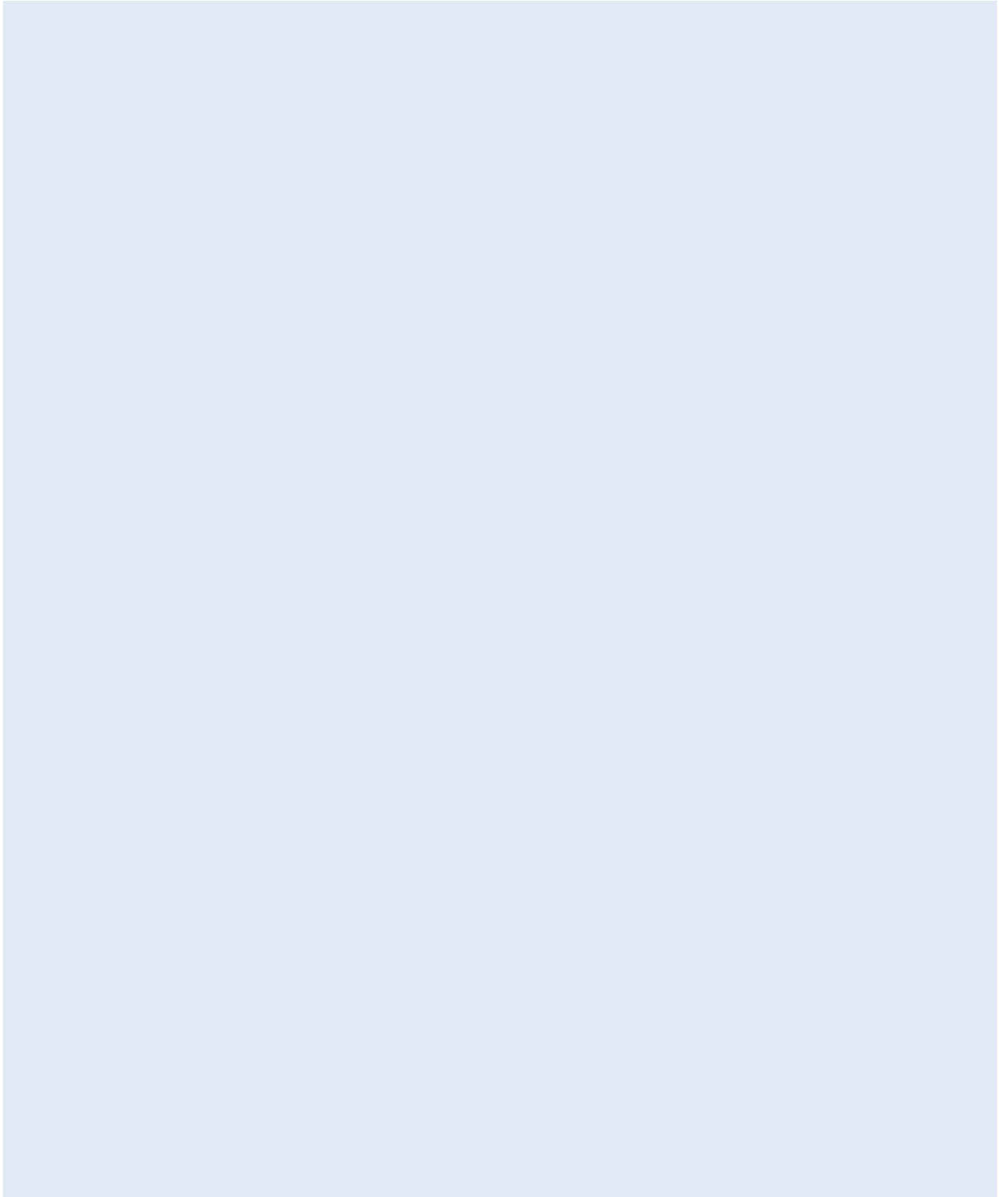
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Price, as tested: £34,995

Permanent magnet synchronous electric motor (201 bhp or 150 kW at 3,800 to 8,000 rpm, 395 Nm or 291 lb.ft at Zero to 3,600 rpm), driving through single speed automatic transmission.

Battery: 64 kWh Li-on polymer, 294 cells, nominal voltage 356, capacity 180 Ah, weight 457 kg (1,008 lb).

Acceleration: 0 - 62 mph, 7.9 seconds



Top speed: 104 mph

City driving range: 402 miles

'Combined' range: 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: 1,757 kg (3,874 lb)

EV6 77.4kWh 'GT-Line' RWD



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The multi-award-winning EV6 was next on my list of cars to drive, and this 'pure-electric-only' Kia is a futuristic-looking state-of-the-art machine, inside and out. The car is the result of collaboration between Kia's worldwide network in Namyang, Korea, Frankfurt in Germany and Irvine in California.

Powering the GT-Line test vehicle that I sampled was a single 226 bhp electric motor, driving the rear wheels via a single speed automatic transmission (twin motors, producing 321 bhp, and all wheel drive feature on faster variants).

The spacious interior is dominated by a 'floating' type centre console, and also features twin



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12.3 inch dashboard touch screens.



Leg and head room are generous for front and rear seat occupants.



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The EV6 incorporates a wealth of standard-fit safety and convenience systems, with multi-aspect connectivity high on the list of features.

During my test drive in this model the weather was atrocious, with heavy rain and flooding restricting speed, and in the end I decided to return to base rather earlier than anticipated. However, the ride comfort, sure-footedness and performance potential of the car was evident. It was also smooth-driving and easy to guide along the waterlogged roads around the base for our test day.

Acceleration, from rest and on the move, was impressive, and Kia figures suggest that the dash from standstill to 62 mph can be accomplished in less than eight seconds.

Of greater importance to many will be the longer-than-usual driving range, of around 320 miles in mixed running, and with nearly 460 miles quoted as the range when motoring in urban conditions.

These good range figures are helped 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

A roomy vehicle for passengers and luggage, and an enjoyable car to drive, with excellent performance potential. The long driving range between battery recharges is a positive for potential purchasers too.



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FAST FACTS – EV6 77.4kWh ‘GT-Line’ RWD

Price, as tested: £44,695

Permanent magnet synchronous electric motor (226 bhp at 4,600 to 9,200 rpm, 350 Nm or 258 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 356, capacity 111.2 Ah,



weight 477.1 kg (1,052 lb).

Acceleration: 0 – 62 mph, 7.3 seconds

Top speed: 114 mph

City driving range: 459 miles

‘Combined’ range: 328 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: 490/1,300 litres (17.30/45.91 cu.ft)

Kerb Weight: 1,985 kg (4,376 lb)

Towing capacity (braked trailer): 1,600 kg (3,527 lb)

PICANTO 1.0 T-GDi GT-Line S



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Kia's Picanto city car – the smallest model in the company's line-up – is now in its third generation, and is available with a choice of trim levels; my test car for my last drive of the day featured the high specification 'GT-Line S' designation.

It has five door, four seater hatchback bodywork (incorporating 44 per cent high strength steel), but for those who prefer, the 'X-Line' and 'X-Line S' variants are available; these are five seater 'crossover' models, which are slightly wider and taller than the hatchback versions.



Under the bonnet of the Picanto I drove was a 1.0 litre three cylinder turbocharged engine, developing 99 bhp and producing a maximum torque (pulling power) figure of 172 Nm (127 lb.ft) all the way from 1,500 to 4,000 rpm. This drives the front wheels through a five speed manual gearbox. During my test drive it pulled strongly, and I especially liked its strong output of torque at relatively low engine speeds, helping in town driving. This Picanto's diminutive but powerful engine also ran sweetly and quietly.



I found that the comfortable front seats provide generous head and leg room, even for a long-legged co-driver colleague who shared my test run in the Picanto. The fascia and trim are pleasantly furnished and, as with the other Kias I drove on this test day, the instrumentation is clearly marked and easy to assimilate.



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With the front seats set towards the rearmost limits of their travel, leg room for rear seat passengers is very tight indeed, improving a little if those in the front seats are able to have their seats set further forward.



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With the rear seats in use the boot doesn't look huge, but it has a capacity of 255 litres (9.01 cu.ft), which Kia tells us is 'best in class' (and it is a compact 'city car', after all), and when the rear seats are folded, the capacity increases to a very commodious 1,010 litres (35.67 cu.ft).



The diminutive 1.0 litre three cylinder engine is a particularly willing unit, accelerating rapidly when required and cruising quietly at maximum U.K. legal road speeds. Torque delivery is quite a revelation, as the motor just pulls and pulls throughout the rev range, up



to around 4,000 rpm.

Fuel consumption promises to be good, with a WLTP 'Combined' figure of 53.3 mpg.

VERDICT

If you often need to carry four adults, you might find that the relative lack of rear seat leg room is a challenge. However in other respects the Picanto is a practical, fun-to-drive car that is easy on the wallet in terms of running costs, and for many people the vehicle's compact size makes it perfect for urban motoring.





FAST FACTS – PICANTO 1.0 T-GDi GT-Line S

Price, as tested, £16,610

1.0 litre turbocharged three cylinder petrol engine, 99 bhp @ 4,500 rpm; 172 Nm (127 lb.ft) @ 1,500 to 4,000 rpm

Acceleration: 0 – 62 mph, 9.9 seconds

Top speed: 112 mph

Fuel consumption, 'Combined': 53.3 mpg

CO2 emissions: 120 g/km

Overall Length: 3595 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: 1,030 kg (2,271 lb)

If you would like to read a fascinating report from my colleague Robin Roberts (WheelsWithinWales) about Kia's current and future plans, plus his brief assessment of the Soul EV Maxx and Sorento, please click here: [kia-charges-ahead](#)



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