Kia’s impressive line-up sampled…

Published: June 10, 2024
Author:
Online version: https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/kias-impressive-line-up-sampled/

This slideshow requires JavaScript.

Kim test-drives Kias – briefly driving five models from the current range, and likes what he found…

It is no surprise to me that Kia is doing well in the U.K. market; to start with the firm offers a very wide range of models that currently encompass petrol power, hybrid propulsion and fully electric vehicles.

Added to this wide range of buyer choice there is Kia’s market-leading seven year warranty, a proven record for reliability in service, also the fact that the vehicles are well-liked by those who own them.

It looks as if sales will soon be getting better still for the company with further newcomers waiting in the wings, including the latest Picanto and the new EV3 compact all-electric SUV. Watch this space please for reports on these in due course, on Wheels-Alive.

During a recent Wiltshire-based Kia driving event for members of the Western Group of Motoring Writers, I had the chance to test-drive a representative selection of cars from the Kia range. As always there were more models available on the day than I had time to drive, but a study of Kia’s UK website displays their full line-up: https://www.kia.com/uk/

Here are my impressions…

(All words and images copyright Kim Henson).

Stonic ‘GT-Line S’ 1.0 T-GDi 48v



My first drive of the day was in the five door Stonic small SUV, in range-topping 'GT-Line S' form, and priced at £25,810 (although range prices start at £21,265).

Kia describes the Stonic as 'a stylish and sporty urban crossover'.

All versions are powered by Kia's three cylinder 1.0 litre T-GDi petrol engine, with a power output of 118 bhp in the GT-Line S that I drove. Notably too, in this variant that small capacity but big-hearted turbocharged motor delivers a healthy maximum torque output of 200 Nm (148 lb.ft) all the way from 2,000 to 3,500 rpm.

Kia’s 48 volt ‘mild hybrid’ system is incorporated within the powertrain, aiding the petrol engine.



Power is delivered to the front wheels via a seven speed DCT (dual clutch) automatic transmission. If desired, manual ratio control can be engaged by the driver from the ‘D’ (‘Drive’) position of the operating lever.

In real life motoring the motor pulls strongly from relatively low engine speeds, with eager acceleration from rest and on the move. It is a competent cruiser too, and at 60 mph the tacho needle was registering just 2,000 rpm, with hushed progress.

I found that under hard acceleration the engine produced a more audible but ‘happy’ sound as revs increased, but the car was not at all noisy. The seven speed DCT auto transmission worked well, with easy, smooth changes being made up or down through the range.

I liked the interior fit, finish and design; neat and practical, with easy to assimilate, very clear instrumentation, and in the GT-Line S, among many standard fittings, there’s an eight-inch touch screen display with navigation system, heated front seats and steering wheel, front and rear parking sensors, Smart Entry System, Intelligent Speed Limit Assist, Smart Cruise Control (DCT version only), and comprehensive connectivity features. Storage spaces abound within the vehicle too.



Exterior features on the GT-Line S include special 17-inch aluminium alloy road wheels, roof rails and electrically adjustable/heated/folding door mirrors incorporating LED indicators.



Of course the car also incorporates a vast array of up-to-the-minute safety systems.

I found the driver's seat to be comfortable and supportive, and over one of my favourite test routes across and around Salisbury Plain, including fast straight sections, tight bends and varying gradients, I rated the ride quality as 'firm-ish but comfortable'. Roadholding and handling abilities were impressive too, with pin-sharp steering responses plus reassuring brakes completing the dynamic picture.

Personally I also like the fact that the Stonic features a ‘traditional’ manually-operated handbrake.

Head room for rear seat occupants is good, with reasonable leg room too, unless the front seats are set towards the rearmost extent of their travel.



The rear seats fold on a 60/40 basis, enabling passenger/luggage carrying space to be varied as required. Boot space is generous for a car of modest overall size.



VERDICT

Compact, fun to drive and practical. The Stonic felt well-built too. Loved it.



Tech Spec in Brief – Stonic ‘GT-Line S’ 1.0 T-GDi 48v

On The Road Price: £25,810

Propulsion:

1.0 litre (998cc) three cylinder 12 valve petrol engine with 48 volt ‘mild hybrid’ system

(118 bhp at 6,000 rpm, 200 Nm or 148 lb.ft at 2,000 to 3,500 rpm)

Transmission: Seven speed Dual Clutch (DCT) automatic

Acceleration: 0 – 62 mph, 10.4 seconds

Top speed: 114 mph

Combined fuel consumption (official figure): 49.6 mpg

CO2 emissions: 129 g/km

Overall Length: 4,140 mm (13.58 ft)

Overall Width: 1,760 mm (5.77 ft)

Overall Height: 1,520 mm (4.99 ft)

Kerb Weight: 1,260 kg (2,778 lb)

Niro HEV ‘2’ 1.6 GDi



The five door, five seater family-friendly Niro is classified by Kia as a ‘compact crossover SUV’.

At the outset it may help to clarify the three different propulsion types offered for the Niro; these are ‘fully electric’, Plug-in Hybrid and (self-charging) ‘Hybrid’ (HEV).

On this occasion I sampled the well-equipped HEV ‘2’ Hybrid model, priced at just over £30,000, and the least expensive of three variants of the Niro HEV. (Note: The higher specification HEV ‘3’ costs £32,335 while the range-topper HEV ‘4’ is priced at £35,085. For comparison purposes, Plug-in Hybrid Niros run from £35,325 to £40,325, and the all-electric

Niros cost from £37,325 to £43,970).

The HEV ‘2’ test car was powered by a 1.6 litre 16 valve four cylinder petrol engine, developing 139 bhp and assisted by a hybrid system incorporating a relatively small capacity battery (1.32 kWh, by comparison with the 11.1 kWh Plug-in Hybrid variant, and the 64.8 kWh type used in the all-electric version).



The powertrain drives the front wheels via a six speed dual clutch (DCT) automatic transmission.

I liked the spacious interior, with good head and leg room throughout, and found the seats and ride quality very comfortable during my hour-long test drive. Another plus point for everyday use is the multitude of storage compartments throughout the vehicle.

This slideshow requires JavaScript.

There’s a generous luggage compartment too, providing a capacity of 451 litres (15.93 cu.ft.) with the rear seats in use, and up to 1,445 litres (51.03 cu.ft) with them folded.



I was impressed by the Niro’s lively performance, and the seamless integration of the petrol

and electric power sources during real-life motoring. It was a smooth, quiet-running vehicle too, at high or low road speeds.

I liked the accommodating suspension that soaked up surface undulations galore found on some of the minor roads on my test route, yet the car handled well too, including on twisting lanes as well as fast roads with sweeping bends.

The brakes and steering felt entirely positive, and the electrically-operated handbrake worked well on the test route gradients I encountered.

The official ‘Combined’ fuel consumption figure is quoted at 64.2 miles per gallon; during my test drive the figures recorded on the on-board trip computer varied from around 55 mpg to better than 64 mpg.



VERDICT

Comfortable, roomy for passengers and luggage, and good to drive too. For many prospective buyers the self-charging hybrid approach, with no need to plug in the vehicle to recharge the hybrid system’s battery, suits their needs perfectly, and is more cost-effective in terms of vehicle price.



Tech Spec in Brief – Niro HEV ‘2’ 1.6 GDi

On the Road Price: £30,085

Propulsion:

1.6 litre (1580cc) four cylinder 16 valve petrol engine (139 bhp @ 5,700 rpm; Max.

torque 265 Nm (195 lb.ft) @ 4,400 rpm)

Plus: TMED type hybrid system

Battery: 1.32 kWh Li-on polymer, nominal voltage 240, located under rear seat

Max. power 42 kW

Battery capacity 5.5 Ah)

Transmission: Six speed automatic

Acceleration: 0 – 62 mph, 10.4 seconds

Top speed: 102 mph

Fuel consumption (‘Combined’): 64.2 mpg

CO2 emissions: 100 g/km

Overall Length: 4,420 mm (14.50 ft)

Overall Width: 1,825 mm (5.99 ft)

Overall height: 1,545 mm (5.07 ft)

Kerb Weight: 1,474 kg (3,250 lb)

EV9 ‘Air’ 99.8 kWh RWD (7-seater)


LJ73 WZR

The latest in the line of Kia all-electric models is the EV9, and I took the opportunity to test drive the rear wheel drive ‘Air’ version, powered by a single electric motor. This produces a peak power output of 200 bhp between 4,200 and 8,200 rpm, with a hefty maximum torque figure of 350 Nm (258 lb.ft) developed all the way from 350 to 4,000 rpm.

Costing £65,025, this newcomer is a large vehicle (‘full size SUV’) accommodating seven seats in three rows, and is said to provide up to 349 miles on a full battery charge, with an ultra-fast charge facility enabling up to 154 miles of driving on a 15 minute charge.

The EV9 is built on a long wheelbase, ‘flat’ platform, known by Kia as the ‘Electric Global Modular Platform’ (E-GMP) and is notable for its unusual, futuristic styling, inside and out. Kia advises that they have employed ‘upcycled’ and plant-based materials in constructing the luxurious and comfortable interior.



The interior is certainly sleek and attractive in appearance, with comfortable seats and space a-plenty for the occupants of the first and second rows of seats, while the two rearmost seats are less generous in terms of leg room, but useful all the same.

This slideshow requires JavaScript.

Notable too are the ‘swivelling’ seats in the centre row. These seats also fold to allow straightforward access to the third row of seats.



The available luggage space varies (of course) according to the number of passengers on board, but with the rearmost seats in use the capacity is 333 litres (11.76 cu.ft), extending to a massive 2,318 litres (81.86 cu.ft) with these seats folded. In addition, there's a 90 litres (3.18 cu.ft) compartment at the front of the vehicle.



The facia is dominated by the large central touch screen assembly ('hub') from which a multitude of vehicle functions can be controlled.



I shall not attempt to list all the standard equipment that comes with this EV9 (this would take at least a small book to cover adequately), but as examples there are rotating roof vents for passengers in the second and third rows of seats, ‘regenerative braking paddle shifters’, a height-adjustable smart powered tailgate, an eight speaker sound system, a nav-based smart cruise control with stop/go functionality, and of course a multitude of safety and connectivity features.

Kia has chosen to install the start controls and main transmission selector (‘Drive’ or ‘Reverse’) just to the right of the steering column, and it’s a simple matter to turn on the power and then to twist the controller to engage forward or reverse drive.



The car is near-silent in operation, and the driving experience is smooth and enjoyable. It's a very refined machine, ideally suited to long distance cruising.

Of course parking requires plenty of space, as with any large SUV, but the EV9 is easy to manouvre and there's 'Blind-spot view' and a 360 degree 'surround view' monitor so that the driver can easily and precisely position the vehicle.

I found the driving seat very comfortable, and I liked the 'soft feel' head restraint.

Steering, braking and suspension responses were excellent – in ride comfort, handling and

roadholding aspects the car felt assured and safe.



VERDICT

If you are looking for a spacious, state-of-the-art fully electric seven seater SUV, the EV9 is not cheap but could be just what you are looking for.



Tech. Spec. in Brief – EV9 ‘Air’ 99.8 kWh RWD (7-seater)

On the Road Price: £65,025

Propulsion:

Single Permanent Magnet Synchronous electric motor, producing 200 bhp between

4,200 and 8,200 rpm, and max. torque of 350 Nm (258 lb.ft) between 0 and 4,000 rpm.

Battery pack: 99.8 kWh Li-ion polymer

Acceleration: 0 – 62 mph, 9.4 seconds

Top speed: 114 mph

City driving range: 480 miles

'Combined' range: 349 miles

Overall Length: 5,010 mm (16.44 ft)

Overall Width: 1,980 mm (6.50 ft)

Overall height: 1,755 mm (5.76 ft)

Kerb Weight: 2,501 kg (5,541 lb)

Ceed 'GT-Line' 1.5 T-GDi



The Ceed compact five door hatchback has long been a popular model in the Kia range, and for this feature I sampled the current ‘GT-Line’ 1.5 T-GDi version with manual transmission, priced at £25,605. In fact this variant represents the second model level in the range, which starts with the Ceed 2, from £23,105. There’s another, ‘higher level’ version too, in the form of the Ceed 3, costing from £26,105.

The GT-Line Ceed is packed with useful standard-fit equipment, including (as examples among many items) a 10.25 inch Touchscreen with satellite navigation (featuring 7-year Kia Connect services, at no extra cost), heated front seats and steering wheel, front and rear electrically-operated windows, powered lumbar support for the driver and front seat

passenger, LED headlamps, a cruise control and speed limiter system, a six speaker sound system and rear parking sensors.



An exterior styling styling pack also comes as standard, as do 17-inch sports aluminium alloy wheels.



Powering this Ceed is a 1.5 litre four cylinder 16 valve engine, developing 158 bhp at 5,500 rpm, and, usefully, maximum torque of 253 Nm (187 lb.ft) all the way from just 1,500 rpm to 3,500 rpm. Confirmed during my test drive, this gives the Ceed an abundance of low speed pulling power as well as plenty of urge at higher engine speeds, helping to make it pleasurable to drive, including in town traffic and hilly districts, as well as on the open road.

A minimum of gearchanging is required in urban driving, but in any case the car's six speed manual change transmission, through which power is fed to the front wheels, has a smooth,

rapid gearchange quality – I found it was a joy to use.



Acceleration from standstill to 62 mph is quoted as taking just 8.4 seconds, perhaps academic for many owners, but underlining the Ceed's sporty nature.

Probably of more relevance to most would be the car's strong acceleration when on the move, and its ability to cruise easily and quietly at higher speeds – at which the Ceed felt mechanically refined.

Handling and roadholding characteristics were commendably good too, and my test route

through mainly rural areas of Wiltshire were challenging in terms of hills, bends and also less than smooth road surfaces, with which the suspension coped well.

I thought that the interior had a high quality look and feel in terms of materials, fit and finish. In addition the driving seat was comfortable for me, albeit during a relatively short test drive.



Driver information was comprehensive, and I liked the fact that the instrumentation was straightforward and easy to view at a glance.



Rear seat leg room is reasonable – adequate for up to three adults to travel comfortably.



The large luggage compartment is wide, deep and long, and versatility in load carrying is aided by a 60/40 rear seat folding facility. The capacity varies from 395 litres (13.95 cu.ft) to with the rear seats in use, to 1,291 litres (45.59 cu.ft) with them folded.



VERDICT

Sporty to drive (with much more rapid performance than might be imagined), practical and competitively priced; a great all-rounder.



Tech. Spec. in Brief – ‘GT-Line’ 1.5 T-GDi

On the Road price: £25,605

Propulsion:

1.5 litre (1582cc) four cylinder 16 valve petrol engine (158 bhp at 5,500 rpm, 253 Nm or 187 lb.ft torque at 1,500 to 3,500 rpm).

Transmission: Six speed manual

Acceleration: 0 – 62 mph, 8.4 seconds

Top speed: 130 mph

Combined fuel consumption (official figure): 49.6 mpg

CO2 emissions: 129 g/km

Overall Length: 4,315 mm (14.16ft)

Overall Width: 1,800 mm (5.91 ft)

Overall height: 1,447 mm (4.75 ft)

Kerb Weight: 1,330 kg (2,932 lb)

EV9 ‘GT-Line S’ 99.8 kWh Twin motor AWD (6-seater)



With my test driving day ticking away towards closedown, and with car transporters ‘circling’ to collect the test drive Kias to take them ‘home’, I was able to have a last and very brief drive in the twin motor, six seater range-topping ‘GT-Line S’ version of the EV9.

I should explain that over and above the ‘Air’ specification level, there are ‘GT-Line’, then ‘GT-Line S’ variants of the EV9, in six or seven seater forms.

As expected, the general feel and behaviour of the twin motor test vehicle were in many ways similar to these characteristics in the single motor EV9 ‘Air’ already driven.

However, with an additional motor and much more power plus twice the amount of available torque, this machine felt – and was – seriously fast when desired, although it was easy and docile to drive at low speeds too, and in traffic.

I found that this EV9 cruised effortlessly and in near-silence at high road speeds; ideal for long-distance motoring.

In this top of the line-up form the EV9 was even more highly specified than the ‘Air’ model, with a very long list of standard-fit equipment including (for example) a 14 speaker premium sound system, 21-inch aluminium alloy road wheels with ‘aero’ covers, driver and front seat passenger ‘premium relaxation’ seats, ‘fingerprint recognition’, a front sun roof with a tilting/sliding function, plus a second row fixed sun roof with an electrically-operated sliding blind – and so on.



The interior exudes modern sophistication, and is a very pleasant ‘place’ in which to travel.



VERDICT

For buyers seeking ultimate responses in terms of EV performance, as well as luxurious interior treatment, the GT-Line S version of the EV9 should be on your shopping list, but you will need around £77,000 to buy one.



Tech. Spec. in Brief – EV9 ‘GT-Line S’ 99.8 kWh Twin motor AWD (6-seater)

On the Road Price: £77,025

Propulsion:

Twin Permanent Magnet Synchronous electric motors, producing 378 bhp between 4,000 and 7,800 rpm, and max. torque of 700 Nm (516 lb.ft) between 0 and 3,800 rpm.

Battery pack: 99.8 kWh Li-ion polymer

Acceleration: 0 – 62 mph, 5.3 seconds

Top speed: 124 mph

City driving range: 415 miles

‘Combined’ range: 313 miles

Overall Length: 5,015 mm (16.45 ft)

Overall Width: 1,980 mm (6.50 ft)

Overall height: 1,780 mm (5.84 ft)

Kerb Weight: 2,648 kg (5,838 lb)