Latest Kia line-up – Brief road tests

Published: November 19, 2021

Author: Kim Henson

Online version: https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/latest-kia-line-up-brief-road-tests/



Above: Kia models awaiting test drives.

Kim Henson gives his assessment of some of the company's current models…

(All words and photographs copyright Kim).

Until the Covid-19 pandemic disrupted ‘everything’ in our lives, for each of the previous few years I had been fortunate to be able to attend a ‘model range’ driving day event kindly arranged by Kia for the Western Group of Motoring Writers (of which I am a long-standing and proud member).

Among other aspects, notably the usefulness of such days to us motoring scribes is the chance to sample a representative selection of the company’s vehicles on the same day, in similar road and weather conditions. However, it goes further than that, since, having driven their current models year on year, the changes and improvements in the line-up are easy to track and to assess.

Thankfully very recently Kia has been able to put on another driving day for us, and from a base in Gloucestershire we were able to drive the cars on a variety of local roads from winding country lanes with indifferent surfaces to fast main ‘A’ roads.

Here is how my day at the wheel worked out… I endeavoured to drive a cross-section of Kia models.

Ceed Sportswagon 1.5 T-GDI ‘3’ ADAP TCT



My first drive of the day was in Kia's stylish Ceed Sportswagon, offering five door generous estate car load carrying abilities within a modern-looking 'fastback' style body shell, and with sporty performance from the four cylinder 1.5 litre turbocharged engine, developing 158 bhp. It's powerful, but torquey too, with a maximum of 253 Nm (187 lb.ft) of torque developed all the way from a lowly 1,500 rpm to 3,500 rpm. On the road this translates into effortless pick-up from low engine speeds, and sprightly acceleration both from rest (nought to 62 mph in 8.8 seconds) and on the move.





I found that this Kia was a quiet and refined vehicle, and at 60 mph the engine needed just 1,900 rpm (approximately). The test car was fitted with a seven speed dual clutch automatic transmission, and during my drive this always seemed to be providing the right ratio at the right time, with smooth changes both up and down through the gearbox.



I especially liked the high quality look and feel to the smart interior, with accommodating, comfortable seats and crystal-clear instrumentation. I was pleased to see that the controls for the heating/ventilation system and sound system (for example) were available to the user without having to work through touch screen menus (which can be distracting).

This slideshow requires JavaScript.

Talking of the touch screen, I found that the generous, 10.25 inch one fitted in this Sportswagon was wide, deep and easy to assimilate at a glance.



Equipment levels are comprehensive, including (for example) roof rails, automatic air conditioning, Kia Connect, a reverse camera with dynamic guidelines, multi-system connectivity, a USB port, DAB radio, etc.

I was disappointed that although head room throughout the car was excellent, leg room for rear seat passengers was somewhat limited. I also felt that the power-assisted steering was a little over-sensitive at speed; just my own impression.

The all-important load compartment is long, wide and sensibly-shaped, aiding loading/unloading, and there's an additional 'box' shaped compartment beneath the main

boot floor, in which to stow additional items.

This slideshow requires JavaScript.

VERDICT

Overall this Kia is an impressive machine, and with a list price of £26,925 (including £580 for ‘premium’ paintwork), it offers much for the outlay.

I should add that the substantial improvement in interior design and finish across the current Kia line-up is embodied and evident too in this Ceed Sportswagon. My writer colleagues at this event also agreed that in the last few years Kias – which were already good – have become better still.



Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

Ceed Sportswagon 1.5 T-GDI ‘3’ ADAP TCT

Engine: Petrol, 1482cc turbocharged four cylinder, 158 bhp @5,500 rpm; Max. 253 Nm (187 lb.ft) torque from 1,500 to 3,500 rpm.

Performance:

0 – 62 mph: 8.8 seconds

Top speed: 130 mph

MPG (Official WLTP Combined): 47.9

CO2 Emissions: 134 g/km

Dimensions:

Overall length: 4,600 mm (15.09 ft)

Wheelbase: 2,650 mm (8.69 ft)

Overall width: 1,800 mm (5.91 ft)

Overall height: 1,465 mm (4.81 ft)

Kerb weight: 1,407 kg (3,102 lb)

Luggage capacity:

With rear seats in use: 625 litres (22.07 cu.ft)

With rear seats folded: 1,694 litres (59.82 cu.ft)

Stonic ‘GT-Line S’ 1.0 T-GDi 48v DCT



With just three cylinders and a capacity of 998cc, you could be forgiven for not having great expectations about the performance levels provided by Kia's Stonic 'GT-Line S'. However, once you get behind the wheel the car becomes a revelation, as I discovered during my second drive of the day.

This 'compact crossover SUV' was a rapid mover, felt firmly planted on the tarmac through twisty sections, and yet was still comfortable over rough surfaces. Handling and roadholding qualities were impressive and the car felt reassuringly safe. I found it a joy to drive.



Propelling the Stonic is a 12 valve, three cylinder petrol engine, developing 118 bhp at 6,000 rpm, and 200 Nm (148 lb.ft) of torque from 2,000 to 3,500 rpm. Therefore the car is surprisingly flexible in traffic and despite its small capacity the motor did not feel strained when hill climbing and accelerating. Nor was it noisy during my test drive.

At 60 mph, the engine needed just 1,900 or so rpm. However the unit was happy to rev freely when required.



The seven speed twin clutch auto transmission worked well, with smooth ratio changes.

Personally I liked the manually-operated handbrake set-up, which worked well.

The Stonic is practical too, with four passenger doors and a big boot. The seats are comfortable, but for rear seat occupants, leg room is restricted (although head room is generous in the front and rear of the car).

This slideshow requires JavaScript.

The instrumentation, also the arrangement of the 8 inch touchscreen, are models of clarity and easy to assimilate.

Equipment levels are good, with the long list of standard-fit items including (as examples) sports road wheels, heated front seats and steering wheel, electric windows front and rear, a six speaker sound system, Forward Collision-Avoidance Assist (FCA), Front and rear parking sensors, reversing camera system, and so on.

Importantly too the turbocharged 1.0 litre engine promises to deliver economical fuel consumption; in real life driving conditions around 50 miles per gallon is a realistic expectation.

The price? ‘On the road’ for £23,950.

VERDICT

Competent, likeable, fun.



Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

Stonic ‘GT-Line S’ 1.0 T-GDi 48v DCT

Engine: Petrol, 998cc turbocharged three cylinder, 118 bhp @6,000 rpm; Max. torque 200 Nm (148 lb.ft) from 2,000 to 3,500 rpm.

Performance:

0 – 62 mph: 10.4 seconds

Top speed: 115 mph

Mpg (Official WLTP Combined): 49.6

CO2 Emissions: 129 g/km

Dimensions:

Overall length: 4,140 mm (13.58 ft)

Wheelbase: 2,580 mm (8.46 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)

EV6 77 kWh ‘Air’ Rear Wheel Drive

This slideshow requires JavaScript.

In the world of electric vehicles, the EV6 crossover is big news, showcasing the rapid progress that Kia has made in this direction during recent years. It’s an all-electric battery EV, with a 77 kWh battery pack to deliver up to a claimed 328 miles between recharges. That makes the vehicle so much more practical in everyday life than most other EVs.

In addition, the battery pack can be recharged from 10 per cent to 80 per cent of its capacity, in just 18 minutes (if using a 350 kW DC charging socket, but rather more than an

hour if using a 50 kW DC socket).

The version I sampled for my third drive of the day was the lowest-priced EV6, the rear wheel drive ‘Air’ model (there are also AWD – ‘All Wheel Drive’ and AWD GT variants, both offering greater power and performance but both also with a less good driving range).

With 226 bhp on tap the ‘Air’ version can scoot from standstill to 62 mph in just 7.3 seconds, and has a top speed of 114 mph. Notably too, its towing capacity is up to 1,600 kg (3.527 lb).

Open the driver’s door with its unusual ‘pull-out’ type door handle, and you are transported to a different ‘space age’ world with a centre console that appears to float, and a comprehensive driver information display that includes a large central screen plus a wealth of performance indicators which are projected onto a separate display immediately ahead of the driver.

Complex though it all appears at first glance, the EV6 is soon mastered and progress is both swift and near-silent.

The interior is spacious and comfortable, and even those travelling in the rear seats benefit from having generous leg room available, plus good head room throughout the vehicle.

This slideshow requires JavaScript.

The boot is also roomy, and the available space is easily accessed.



The car is packed with useful features, including (as examples) a 12.3 inch display screen, multiple system connectivity, reverse parking sensors plus a reversing camera, heated front seats, heated steering wheel, etc.



Under the front ‘bonnet’ you are confronted with a large plastic cover, which lifts to reveal not the electric motor, which might be expected (this is housed lower and further back in the ‘chassis’), but an additional large, deep storage box.

This slideshow requires JavaScript.

From behind the steering wheel in any battery electric vehicle, thought usually turns to how many miles are left in terms of battery power (‘range’). As mentioned, in theory this can be as much as 328 miles. However when I took out this EV6 test car for a drive, the dash display told me that the remaining driving range was 183 miles, on 74 per cent remaining

battery power. Such long range figures help inspire confidence, so that in real life operation the car can be much more useful than some BEV models with a much less generous range…

This car can be as docile as a kitten when driving in traffic, yet given its head on the open road the vehicle will rapidly gain speed in near-silence.

I discovered that the ride quality was supple, but the EV6 cornered well on some tight, bending lanes as well as the more gently curving main roads I found.



VERDICT

It is no exaggeration to say that the EV6 is exhilarating to drive and the electric motor operates very smoothly; progress during my test drive always felt refined. Its long driving range will endear it to many, making the car a practical proposition for family use and long journeys. It is therefore no surprise that it has already been a multi-award winning vehicle.

With a list price of £40,945 it will still be outside the realms of possibility for many potential buyers but Kia has been producing and further developing electric vehicles for some time and the EV6 is a great example of its type.



Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:



EV6 77.4 kWh ‘Air’ Rear wheel drive

Electric motor: Permanent magnet synchronous motor with 77.4 kWh Li-on polymer battery (384 cells, nominal voltage 697).

Max. power 225 bhp from 4,600 to 8,600 rpm; Max. torque 350 Nm (258 lb.ft) torque from 4,600 to 8,600 rpm.

Transmission: Single speed automatic.

Performance:

0 – 62 mph: 7.3 seconds

Top speed: 114 mph

City range: 450 miles

Combined range: 328 miles

Dimensions:

Overall length: 4,680 mm (15.35 ft)

Wheelbase: 2,900 mm (9.51 ft)

Overall width: 1,880 mm (6.17 ft)

Overall height: 1,550 mm (5.09 ft)

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

Kia ProCeed 1.5 T-GDi ‘GT-Line’



My fourth outing for the day was in a ProCeed, in this case powered by Kia’s 1.5 litre turbocharged four cylinder petrol engine, driving through a six speed manual gearbox.



The sleek appearance of the ProCeed, with its ‘shooting brake’ styling that blurs the lines between a hatchback and an estate car, conceals a huge luggage compartment, as well as a comfortable, well-appointed interior that will accommodate up to five occupants, albeit with limited leg room for those in the rear seat.

This slideshow requires JavaScript.

I found that the 157 bhp 1.5 litre motor pulled willingly throughout the rev range, as expected since the maximum torque output is quoted as being 253 Nm (187 lb.ft) all the way from 1,500 to 3,500 rpm. In normal driving, for example in heavy traffic, this is helpful as

the vehicle is easy to drive and with minimal gearchanging required, it also means that the car gleefully romps up steep gradients – and I found quite a few in Gloucestershire during my test run.



The gearchange on the test car was delightfully smooth, slick and rapid in operation, and in top (sixth) gear the rev counter was indicating just 2,100 rpm – very quiet and relaxing.

I found that the driving seat was comfortable, in addition the suspension – MacPherson struts up front, plus a multi-link set-up at the rear, provided reassuring handling as well as ironing out most of the bumps that the uneven tarmac (that we so often experience!) could provide.



Steering and braking was effective too, and although I am not a fan of electrically operated parking brakes in general, the system on the ProCeed worked well.

The boot is cavernous even with the rear seats in use, being long, wide and deep, and easily accessed from bumper height. With the rear seats folded the capacity becomes almost van-like.

VERDICT

A thoroughly practical, stylish family vehicle, comfortable, lively and enjoyable on the road.

With a WLTP ‘Combined’ fuel consumption figure of 48.7 miles per gallon, the car is efficient as well as good to drive.

Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

Kia ProCeed 1.5 T-GDi ‘GT-Line’

Engine: Petrol, 1482cc turbocharged 16 valve four cylinder, 157 bhp @ 5,500 rpm; Max. torque 253 Nm (187 lb.ft) from 1,500 to 3,500 rpm.

Performance:

0 – 62 mph: 8.6 seconds

Top speed: 130 mph

Mpg (Official WLTP Combined): 48.7

CO2 Emissions: 131 g/km

Dimensions:

Overall length: 4,605 mm (15.11 ft)

Wheelbase: 2,650 mm (8.69 ft)

Overall width: 1,800 mm (5.91 ft)

Overall height: 1,422 mm (4.67 ft)

Kerb weight: 1,398 kg (3,082 lb)

Load compartment, seats in use: 594 litres (20.98 cu.ft)

Load compartment, seats folded: 1,545 litres (54.56 cu.ft)

Stinger 3.3 T-GDi V6 ‘GT S’



As the end of the driving day approached, and with time for just one more test drive, there were still a few models on my own list of Kias that I had hoped to drive on the day, that I had not been able to sample. This was only because they were in popular demand and happened to be already out and about at the times when I was at the booking desk. These included the latest Picanto, the ‘baby’ in Kia’s line-up, and the e-Niro. However, my disappointment was quickly offset by the excitement in realising that sat waiting in the car park for the next custodian for another drive was another Kia near the top of my ‘wish list’ for the day – the extraordinary Stinger.

This slideshow requires JavaScript.

This 3.3 litre turbocharged V6 petrol powered machine is a finely-engineered and beautifully-finished sporting mid-sized five seater hatchback. Compared with the Picanto, it is at the opposite end of Kia's broad spectrum of cars. No matter; the fact that the company can and does produce both these models – each well-respected for the way that they perform in their very different roles – as well as so many competent vehicles in between the two extremes, is testament to the firm's dedication in the quest to excel in all areas of the market.

The Stinger is a driver's car, that's for sure, and it is built around and within eye-catching stylish bodywork that indicates its sporting potential. However it should be mentioned that the car is entirely practical too, in terms of its passenger accommodation, with comfortable seats front and rear, all providing generous head and leg room, and with a spacious, extremely useful boot.

This slideshow requires JavaScript.

The quiet, smooth-running V6 engine proved to be a delight on the road, whether purring along gently in built-up areas (in this situation the car is a docile vehicle, and easy to drive), meandering through the lanes or showing its mettle on fast open routes. Picking-up speed, when required, was instantaneous and the eight speed automatic transmission was a perfect partner for the 3.3 litre motor; at all times it felt as if the gearbox was always operating in the most appropriate ratio.



This is a powerful vehicle, with an output of 361 bhp at 6,000 rpm, and a huge maximum torque figure of 510 Nm (376 lb.ft) from a lowly 1,300 rpm all the way up to 4,500 rpm. The combined effect can be summed up by just saying ‘effortless’, but I’ll add ‘pure fun’ as well.

That said, if unconstrained the Stinger could soon see you reaching ‘Hello officer’ speeds, so caution is required as the car gains pace so rapidly when asked.

From a standstill it can propel itself to 62 mph in just 4.7 seconds, and the theoretical top speed is 167 mph… More usefully for most, at 60 mph the engine was working gently and in a hushed manner at around an indicated 1,500 rpm, at which speed it is sipping fuel,

relatively speaking…

For most of my drive I left the car's drive mode rotary controller set to the 'Comfort' position, which I found spot-on for most situations. However, I did switch to 'Sport' and even 'Sport +' modes, and on each occasion the 'Wow' factor arrived in an instant. With either of these modes selected, the electronic control systems switch to 'Let's go' attitude, and the car just shoots ahead and 'sharpens up' accordingly. Acceleration, from rest and on the move, is terrific and exhilarating.

Yet… during my test drive the car always felt controllable and regardless of drive mode setting, the brakes, steering and suspension all worked together in a reassuring and safe-feeling way.

While on the subject of suspension (MacPherson struts up front, with a five-link multi-link set up at the rear), with the driving mode set to 'Comfort' the ride quality was supple, yet at the same time I found that handling and roadholding qualities were spot-on.

The Stinger is packed with safety/vehicle control systems that help the driver, in addition to an array of useful features throughout the car.

One aspect that I especially liked was the camera set-up that displays views along the sides of the vehicle, for example when waiting at a junction with the indicators operating, the camera on that side of the car will send images to the dash screen, so if another vehicle, or bike, or pedestrian (etc.) ventures into that area, the driver will see this before turning in that direction.

Examples from the long list of equipment included in the standard specification of the Stinger are: 19 inch sports road wheels, a wide sun roof, Advanced Smart Cruise Control (ASCC), customisable 'Head Up Display' (HUD), an Integrated Memory System (IMS) for the driver's seat, door mirrors, HUD system and cluster display, multiple connectivity functions, a DAB radio and a 15 speaker Harman/Kardon premium sound system.

The on-the-road price of the car I drove is listed at £43,380, which includes ‘premium’ paint costing £675 (including VAT), which is not cheap but to my mind providing a huge lot of sophisticated and enjoyable motor car for the money.

Of course, the Stinger is not primarily intended to be an ‘economy’ model when it comes to fuel consumption, but with a WLTP ‘Combined’ figure of 28.0 miles per gallon, to me that seems quite reasonable bearing in mind the car’s performance potential.

VERDICT

Wonderful – not just for the excellent performance available and the refined way in which the car delivered it, but also for the versatility and usefulness of the vehicle, its top quality finish, inside and out, and the fact that it has so evidently been designed and built with such flair and care.



Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. In Brief:

Stinger 3.3 T-GDi V6 ‘GT S’

Engine: Petrol, 3342cc turbocharged 24 valve V6 cylinder, 361 bhp @ 6,000 rpm; Max. torque 510 Nm (376 lb.ft) from 1,300 to 4,500 rpm.

Performance:

0 – 62 mph: 4.7 seconds

Top speed: 167 mph

Mpg (Official WLTP Combined): 28.0

CO2 Emissions: 229 g/km

Dimensions:

Overall length: 4,830 mm (15.85 ft)

Wheelbase: 2,905 mm (9.53 ft)

Overall width: 1,870 mm (6.14 ft)

Overall height: 1,400 mm (4.59 ft)

Kerb weight: 1,855 kg (4,090 lb)

At the end of the day…

My test drive in the Stinger was a marvellous way in which to complete my test drives in the five Kias I drove on the day.

An impressive range of cars, incorporating models to suit all needs.