New Renault Koleos SUV – First Impressions

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...And then there were three – New Koleos extends Renault's SUV range.

By David Miles (Miles Better News Agency).

Small, medium and now large, the Renault range of SUVs stretches from the compact Captur (Europe's best selling small SUV) to the mid-sized Kadjar and now the large D-segment five seater Koleos has arrived in UK showrooms to order now with deliveries from 1 September.

But it's not the first time the Koleos name has appeared in the Renault range. The original semi-SUV model, perhaps a forerunner of today's fashionable Crossovers, sold from 2007

until 2010 but it fell short of sales so Renault in the UK canned it. The Koleos five door large SUV is the first D-segment sized car Renault has sold in the UK since the demise of their Laguna and Espace models in 2011.

Renault is launching Koleos at a prime time for SUV sales. Customers cannot get enough of them with record sales continuing and more new additions arriving all the time. In the D-segment of large SUVs, UK sales in 2015 were 100,000 units. In 2016 they had increased to 140,000.



The Koleos range has prices starting from £27,500 and they rise to £34,200. Available with

two high levels of standard specification – Dynamique S Nav and Signature Nav – there are a number of realistically affordable options which can be added to the lower specced version, such as the £400 Climate Pack which provides heated front and rear seats, heated windscreen, heated steering wheel and ventilated front seats. Hands-free parking costs £350, alternative brown or silver coloured leather upholstery £400, metallic paint £545, BOSE sound system with 13 speakers £600 and the must-have spare wheel at £120 – but I would rather have that fitted as a standard spec item.

But to get to what the six model Koleos range really gives UK customers. Well no petrol engine option for a start, not potentially a good move considering the increasing sales of petrol powered models instead of demonised diesels. But as Renault UK points out in this sector 87% of customers buy a diesel powered model.

Koleos is offered with two dCi turbodiesel four cylinder engines, a 1.6 130 hp unit with a manual six-speed gearbox and front wheel drive plus a 2.0 litre unit with 175 hp with six-speed manual and new CVT type X-Tronic automatic gearbox choices and with 4WD. Both engine options are available with the two trim and equipment levels – Dynamique S Nav and Signature Nav. The lower level is expected to be chosen by 53% of customers. Around 43% of customers will be retail buyers and fleet and business user-chooser customers will account for 57% of registrations. Around 80% of buyers will choose a 4WD model and 66% will choose the automatic gearbox option.



The most popular engine will be the 2.0 litre 175 hp unit, said Renault this week at the UK media launch, and with the most popular Dynamique S Nav specification, 4WD and auto transmission this version is priced at £31,900. As usual Renault UK were not forthcoming about their sales expectations but its competitors will include the Hyundai Santa Fe, Kia Sorento, Ford Edge, Land Rover Discovery Sport, Skoda Kodiaq, Honda CR-V, Mazda CX-5, Mitsubishi Outlander, Peugeot 5008 and the Nissan X-Trail, which shares the platform and other components with the Koleos under the Renault-Nissan Alliance. Renault are also aiming to compete for sales against the premium brand Audi Q5/Q7 and BMW X5/X6 SUVs.

Yann Le-Graet, Product Manager for Koleos in Britain, said, “Koleos is not about huge volumes and selling cheap because it is just two trim levels both with a lot of equipment which buyers have told us they want in their SUV. It will be an important addition to our SUV and Crossover family and help build up the brand after its rationalisation in 2010 and it

comes on the back of strong sales for Renault UK over the last few years."

Whereas some of the competitor models offer seven seats, the Koleos is a five seater version, which Renault says is the more popular roomier layout in its sector with plenty of rear seat legroom. At 4,672 mm (15.33 ft) in length the Koleos has a 458 litre (16.17 cu.ft) boot which extends to 1,690 litres (59.68 cu.ft) with the rear seats folded down via a button in the boot. The top spec Signature Nav variants come with a powered tailgate which is opened either by the familiar Renault Keycard or by waving a foot under the rear bumper. The Koleos has a braked towing weight of 2,000 kg (4,409 lb) for manual models and 1,650 kg (3,638 lb) for the automatic.

Standard equipment includes several driver assistance systems, such as Advanced Emergency Braking System (AEBS), Blind Spot Warning, Lane Departure Warning, Over-speed Prevention with Traffic Sign Recognition and Hill Start Assist. A rear parking camera with front and rear parking sensors is also included on all versions as well as an electrochrome rear mirror. Standard safety features include ABS with Electronic Brake-force Distribution, ESC (Electronic Stability Control) with traction and understeer control, cruise control, speed limiter, Hill Start Assist, six airbags, seat belts with load limiters and pretensioners at the front, side impact protection bars and ISOFIX child-seat mounting points on the two outer rear seats. Outside the Koleos Dynamique S Nav has 18-inch 'Agapi' two-tone alloy wheels and electrically-adjustable heated and folding door mirrors, plus roof bars.





Moving up to the Signature Nav spec level and included is an opening panoramic sunroof, part-black leather upholstery with extra tinted rear windows, ambient lighting, cup holders able to heat and cool drinks for front passengers and a central armrest with in-built cup holders in the rear. Automatic Dual-zone climate control, a Hands Free Keycard and automatic lights and wipers are also fitted. The spec also includes 19-inch 'Galiki' two-tone alloy wheels and full LED 'Pure Vision' headlights. Inside there is full black leather upholstery with heated front seats and the R-LINK2 multimedia system is increased to an 8.7-inch portrait touchscreen as seen on the latest Mégane and Scenic models.

Connectivity and infotainment are seemingly big sales features these days so all versions have four USB and two AUX ports provided, the Arkamys 3D Sound 4x35W DAB radio with 7.0 or 8.7-inch touchscreen, the R-LINK2 multimedia system includes satellite navigation with TomTom LIVE traffic updates, Android Auto and Apple CarPlay smartphone connectivity, Western European mapping, Bluetooth audio streaming and handsfree connectivity.

The All-New Koleos is manufactured at the Busan plant in South Korea alongside Renault-Samsung Motors models.

The 1.6 litre dCi 130 hp, 320 Nm (236 lb.ft) turbodiesel unit with six-speed manual transmission is available only with two-wheel drive and with a six speed manual gearbox.

The 2.0 litre dCi 175 hp engine is available with either a six-speed manual or seven-speed Auto X-Tronic transmission with four-wheel drive as standard. It produces 380 Nm (280 lb.ft) of torque from 2,000 rpm.

The new X-Tronic automatic continuously variable transmission is designed to offer smoother gearchanges than CVT transmissions are noted for, allowing responsive driving without any interruption of torque. X-Tronic continuously adjusts through seven gear steps to maintain optimal engine speed. The four-wheel-drive versions are equipped with the new ALL MODE 4×4-i technology. This allows the driver to select AUTO, LOCK or 2WD modes.

At the UK media launch held this week in The Cotswolds the emphasis was on the potential for the Koleos to gain conquest customers who normally buy premium brands. To that end only the top level Signature Nav 2.0 dCi 175 hp auto X-Tronic 4WD version was available for us to test drive. This model carries the £34,200 top of the range price tag.

With 175 hp and 380 Nm (280 lb.ft) of torque this felt a strong and responsive unit and was generally smooth and quiet except under extreme load. With the auto gearbox top speed is 125 mph and zero to 62 mph takes 9.5 seconds, a shade faster than the manual gearbox version. The EU Combined Cycle fuel economy is officially 47.9 mpg and on our test drive covering all types of roads including narrow country lanes, busy main roads, stop-start in-town traffic and a section of motorway cruising, the figure was 36 mpg. A section of mild off-roading using country estate grassland and gravel tracks reduced this to 34.2 mpg. With CO2 emissions of 156 g/km VED First Year rate road tax is £500 before the £140 Standard rate for year two onwards. Company car drivers will pay 33% Benefit-in-Kind tax.



The general handling was predictable for such a large, high off the ground vehicle, but there was some cornering bodyroll and the steering lacked sharp feedback. The suspension settings offer a comfortable ride on well-maintained main roads but poorly-maintained town or country roads took their toll on providing a composed ride. There was significant noise intrusion through the suspension from impacts with potholes and sunken trenches across road surfaces. There was also a significant road noise from the tyres.

The styling is very much modern-day Renault with its prominent front grille with the over-large Renault badge centrally positioned and the clamshell bonnet added an extra layer of

visual styling quality. The side view has a rising waistline over mildly sculptured lower door and body panels and the rear business end of the vehicle has a large easy to use automated tailgate. The rear passenger doors open really wide for easy access.



VERDICT

The comprehensive equipment, large comfortable supportive seats and general layout of the controls are high points of the interior design. There seemed plenty of soft-touch trim but there were areas of hard plastic as well which potential premium brand owners might not appreciate. You could also moan about having no petrol engine option or not offering seven seats but that would be too picky, Renault has gone with what real customers mainly want.

For: An impressive return by Renault to the large D-segment passenger car market, roomy –

especially rear seat legroom, comfortable seats, loads of specification, lots of safety and driving support systems, genuine off-road ability with its locking differential, good residual values predicted.

Against: This top spec version is expensive with the mechanically identical Dynamique S Nav 175 auto 4WD priced at £31,900 being a better choice for most users, road noise and impacts from potholes intruded too much into the cabin, some cornering bodyroll and limited steering feedback.



Milestones and Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

Renault Koleos Signature Nav dCi 175 Auto X-Tronic 4WD.

Price: £34,200.

Engine/transmission: 2.0 litre, four cylinder turbodiesel, 175 hp 380 Nm (320 lb.ft) of torque from 2,000 rpm, seven speed CVT automatic with 4WD.

Performance: 125 mph, 0–62 mph 9.5 seconds.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 47.9 mpg (36 mpg on test on-road driving).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 156 g/km, VED £500/£140, BiK company car tax 33%.

Insurance Group: 23E.

Warranty: Four years/100,000 miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,672 mm (15.33 ft), W 1,843 mm (6.05 ft), H 1,678 mm (5.51 ft), boot/load space 458 to 1,690 litres (16.17 to 59.68 cu.ft), braked towing weight 1,650 kg (3,638 lb), five doors/five seats.