

A Little More Soul from KIA

Need a little colour in your motoring, then KIA may just have the answer with the second generation.

This quirky styled crossover may be a popular choice with students in California and now there is a new model which will appeal to all, even many here in Northern Ireland.



The latest version of the compact crossover which started the design-led revolution that has transformed perceptions of the company in the UK, is now on sale from as low as £12,600 with prices rising to £21,550.

The latest version offers dramatic SUV crossover styling, improved space in a revitalised and higher-quality cabin, enhanced safety and sharper driving dynamics thanks to a new chassis based on that of the Kia cee'd which is one of the most popular models from the South Korean car company.

There is a choice of two efficient engines and five trim levels and all

versions are front-wheel-drive in the five door style.

The engines are 1.6-litre capacity, a direct-injection petrol and a turbo diesel, both tuned for effortless driving flexibility.

The diesel has CO₂ emissions as low as 132g/km and fuel economy as high as 56.5mpg. Towards the end of this year there will be a fully-electric version of the car, called Soul EV, the company's first global commercial EV with zero tailpipe emissions.

Trim levels are Start, Connect and Connect Plus which will be joined in the summer by the Soul Mixx and Soul Maxx, with even more extrovert styling and higher levels of technology than ever before.

I learned from Kia that research has shown while buyers desire the appearance, semi-elevated driving position and perceived safety advantages of a 4x4, they do not want the higher fuel consumption and taxation that four-wheel drive entails.

. The second generation model arrives at the right time to take advantage of the boom in the compact crossover market. Annual sales of this type of car in Western Europe are forecast to rise from around 380,000 in 2013 to more than 600,000 by 2015. Just over a quarter of buyers are British.



The opportunity came my way to try the newcomer both in the city and in the countryside; now the Soul is sportier, more tough-looking, it has a 20mm longer wheelbase and the height is lowered by 10mm.

The tailgate opening is 62mm wider and provides access to a four per cent larger



boot, 354 litres with the rear seats upright, With the rears seats folded the luggage capacity is 994 litres to the cargo cover and a maximum of 1,367 litres up to the roof level.

The KIA designers have put a great deal of effort into giving more of a premium look through detailing like the LED indicators in the mirror housings on all but the Soul Start; the projection headlights with LED daytime running lamps, LED rear lamps and chromed exterior door handles on the Soul Mixx and Maxx; and panoramic sunroof on the Soul Maxx.

All models feature significant upgrades in equipment and technology compared with the previous model.

The new Soul is fun to drive with a very practical element; if you would like to drive something different, this new KIA may be the answer.

Ian Lynas