

FORD KUGA 2.0D

By Jim Mc Cauley



Like most new models from all of the manufacturers, Ford's new Kuga has grown, despite the fact that there is also the more generously proportioned Edge topping Ford's trio of SUVs. Below the Kuga sits the EcoSport, the company's smaller and front-wheel drive only SUV.

The original Kuga was a massive success for Ford, but as the company moves from regional specific models to world cars, the latest model has received a world-class revision. The increase in size and available options has moved it up a sector with a wide range of petrol and diesel

power units to cater for as broad a customer base as possible.

The test vehicle is at the top of the range both in engine type and specification, its 2.0 litre turbo diesel being the more powerful of the two available outputs. This 180PS engine drives through a 6-speed automatic gearbox which takes the vehicle from rest to 62mph in just 10 seconds with the potential to top 124mph. Drive on this high specification 'ST Line X' is to all four wheels although there is the option of two-wheel drive only on other specification levels.

Design-wise, the new Kuga carries Ford's latest corporate grille with the metallic copper paintwork of the test vehicle complemented by black exterior trim and black 19-inch alloys.

Over a couple of weeks I had the opportunity to cover nearly 1,100 miles on Irish roads which gave a substantial account of the vehicle. In 'ST Line X', the model benefits from a firmer suspension set-up, and the automatic transmission also offers the option of a 'Sport' setting as well as manual override on the steering wheel mounted paddles.



On road, and the 2.0 litre diesel is extremely refined providing a quiet cabin in keeping with the more luxurious interior provision of the higher specification. Progress is smooth through the automatic 'box, and while the firmer suspension communicates poorer road surfaces at lower speeds, it responds well on the open road and maintains excellent balance through fast corners. Initial engagement is also quite good, for example when having to stop on entering a roundabout and moving off again quickly. Its steering competently shows its chassis heritage with neat, precise response adding to the overall driving experience well above the norm for an SUV.

With the new model comes equipment upgrades and this particular vehicle was fitted with front and



rear parking sensors with self parking facility, all helping to navigate the 4.5 metre Kuga into tighter parking spaces. The model also came with stability control and cruise control contributing to its 5-star EuroNCAP safety award where it also scored highly on driver, pedestrian and child protection.

For the occupants, there is a roomy 5-seater cabin with power adjustment for the driver's seat and backrest adjustment for the rear seat passengers. The test vehicle featured a leather interior with Alcantara insets as well as a full-length glass sunroof with opening front section.

For the driver, there is the option of a digital speed readout in the main instrument panel to complement the analogue instruments and the satellite navigation, while a little awkward to set, is one of the most accurate encountered with clear instructions always given in good time. This central colour display also benefits from a one-touch blackout for night driving if required while excellent lights feature auto-on facility with automatic dipping on meeting oncoming vehicles.

A generous boot of 406 litres can be extended to 1603 litres with the rear seats down, achievable with a one-touch operation, while a powered tailgate with under bumper sensor provides easy access and closing when dealing with luggage. The test vehicle also benefited from having an emergency spare wheel for added security although roadside emergency support is part of the the 3-year warranty package.

Overall, the new Kuga, designed for a world market, impresses among the SUV offerings, in particular its driving dynamics and generous cabin space. Attention to detailing is also good, although the model would benefit from hydraulic assistance for the heavy bonnet when checking fluid levels, and a power socket in the luggage area would also be appreciated.

Close to the top of the specification chain, this higher output 2.0 litre diesel with drive to all four wheels via its 6-speed automatic gearbox is listed at £34,295. While its official fuel consumption is given as 57.6mpg, the test vehicle in almost 1,100 miles of driving on Irish roads with a full complement of passengers recorded 37.2mpg - 65% of the official figure. The model has a CO2 emissions of 134gms/km and is in Band 26E for insurance purposes.

(Driven July 2017)