

KIA OPTIMA SPORTSWAGEN

By Jim Mc Cauley



With the launch of the substantially updated flagship Optima saloon, comes the addition of an estate variant which allows Kia to increase choice at the premium end of the market. The revised exterior styling on the second generation model presents a car that is dramatically revised beneath the skin including a 50% stiffer bodyshell and improved 1.7 litre diesel power unit.

The Sportswagen benefits from these revisions and occupies the same exterior dimensions as the saloon, its lines tailored to add to the overall visual impact of the car. Both the

Sportswagen's design and engine revisions are products of Kia's European Design and Development centres in Germany and no doubt tailor both appearance and performance to European tastes. The vehicle is sold only in Europe.

The original Optima was in itself a very attractive car, heralding the proportions now seen in some prestige vehicles, and the subtle revisions to the second generation maintain its freshness in appeal.

Test choice was the top 'GT-Line S' specification which offers the most luxurious and technically advanced option in the three-stage line-up. However, there is just a single engine option and all models are fitted with the 1.7 litre 4-cylinder turbo-diesel unit. This revised engine now develops 139bhp with torque increased to 340Nm from 1,750rpm. In the case of the 'GT-Line S' model, drive is through the company's new 7-speed automatic transmission.

On-road, and the car is quite refined, the diesel engine settling to a smoother beat than when ticking over. The 7-speed transmission moves smoothly up and down the 'box with an excellent holding ability on steep hill descents. Steering is lighter than I would expect on a car of this size but offers good response and



excellent lock. Ride is also well cushioned and adds to the executive nature of the car while passenger accommodation is excellent all-round, with rear passengers also benefiting from heated seats.

The cabin is tastefully finished in black leather with contrasting red stitching highlighting the quality finish, and the central colour touch-screen with its call-up menus gracefully simplifies the dash layout with its smooth linear front, sweeping into the upper door cappings.



For the driver, there is a comprehensive package of active safety technologies including hill-start assist, blind spot detection, lane-keep assist, rear cross traffic alert (when reversing) and tyre pressure monitoring system. Other driving aids include front and rear parking sensors with rear-view camera and 'Smart Park Assist System' for automatic selection and steering into a parking space.

But the attraction of an estate variant is in its additional load carrying capacity and in this respect the Optima Sportswagen has a standard boot capacity of 552 litres, including two

underfloor storage boxes, and this can be extended to 1,686 litres with the rear seats folded. To assist loading, the tailgate is power assisted, and to hold good safely there is a sliding rail securing system built into the luggage area floor.

With regards to running costs, the model tested has a combined fuel consumption of 61.4mpg and with a CO2 emissions of 120gms/km is in Band C for annual road tax of £30. The Optima Sportswagen, as tested in 'GT-Line S' trim is listed at £30,595 and like all Kia models has the industry leading 7-year / 100,000 mile warranty and 12-year anti-perforation guarantee. For additional peace of mind, owners can avail of a 3 or 5-year inflation-proof servicing package from £329.

(Driven December 2016)