

# KIA SORENTO

By Jim Mc Cauley



First launched in 2002, Kia has taken the Sorento to its third generation with a model that is longer, lower and wider than its predecessor. Sole power source is a 2.2 litre turbodiesel delivering drive to all four wheels via a 6-speed manual or 6-speed automatic gearbox. And overall, it is the first Kia vehicle to be produced under their new global quality strategy which they say is a significant step forward for the company in terms of fit, finish and technology applications. The car is large, providing generous accommodation for as many as seven occupants with the standard flip-up rear row of seats.

The new engine develops 197 bhp and outputs a substantial 441 Nm of torque from 1750 rpm. This takes the vehicle with its manual gearbox from rest to 62 mph in 9.0 seconds with the potential to top 124 mph. The vehicle is also fitted with a standard start / stop system to aid economy.

On road, and the Sorento is very refined, and so quiet at normal road speeds that the predominant sound is the wind around the windscreen area. Pulling power is excellent with good in-gear flexibility and the controls are not as heavy as expected in a vehicle of this size. There is an overriding refinement that steps the new Sorento upmarket, confirming Kia's aspirations for it.

On this second from the top KX-3 model, interior appointments and overall finish make the quality improvements very apparent. Soft-touch plastics, gloss black inlays and featured edge stitching on the dash all point towards a luxury leisure vehicle as opposed to a practical work vehicle, while the overall specification list just goes on and on.

To aid manoeuvring a vehicle of this size in a confined space it is fitted as standard with parking sensors and an excellent rear view



camera. For loading up, the tailgate has automatic opening and closing while the boot in 5-seat configuration can swallow over 600 litres. The split folding middle row of seats can be slid fore and



aft to further balance passenger and luggage requirements.

For occupants, front and middle row seats are heated as well as the steering wheel, while xenon headlights provide excellent night time coverage with auto operation.

Overall, Kia has clearly improved on its flagship Sorento model which is well equipped to penetrate the prestige 4X4 sector with high quality throughout and comprehensive equipment levels.

On the economy front, the 2.2 litre turbodiesel returns an official 46.3 mpg on the combined cycle with a CO2 emissions of 161 gms/km. This puts it in Band G for annual car tax of £180 and rates it at 30% for BIK.

In the KX-3 specification level tested the Sorento is priced at £35,845 and is in Group 26 for insurance purposes. Like all Kia models it is covered by a 7-year / 100,000 mile warranty and 12-year anti-corrosion cover. For added peace of mind, 3 and 5-year service packages are available from £349.