

SsangYong Korando LE

By Jim Mc Cauley

With the security of new ownership from the Indian firm of Mahindra, SsangYong has increased its presence across the UK with a particular focus in Northern Ireland. The brand now has six dealerships across the Province as it promotes its 3-model range headed by the all-new Korando.

This new addition takes the company into the growing 'crossover' market where buyers can be tempted by a compact SUV as an alternative to the run-of-the-mill hatchback that dominates the 'C' sector of the market.

Designed in Europe by the man who gave us the De Lorean, the Giugiaro designed



model lines up against formidable competition from Ford, Nissan, Mitsubishi and Kia. Compared to the long serving Rexton and Rodius models, the Korando brings a fresh impetus to the brand and underlines its eagerness to step into the mainstream market place.

Underneath the attractive and well-balanced lines of the bodywork is the sole engine choice – an all-new 2.0 litre diesel rated at 175PS at 4000 rpm. Choice is then 2-wheel drive or 4-wheel drive across the three trim levels with prices starting at £14,995. The front-wheel drive model is available in the two lower trims while the top of the range EX specification is reserved for the 4X4 model.

All versions feature Electronic Stability Program, cruise control, Hill Start Assist and reverse parking sensors, while the higher two specifications feature climate control, sun roof, leather upholstery and heated front and rear seats.



Available with a choice of 6-speed manual or 6-speed automatic transmissions, test choice was the special edition 2-wheel drive model in LE trim, finished in attractive Vitamin Red – a £500 metallic paint extra.

The car immediately distances itself from the earlier generation models with its overall freshness and interior quality.

On-road, the LE is no slouch hitting the benchmark 0-62 mph target in a whisker under 10 seconds, but with maximum torque of 360 Nm between 2000 and 3000 rpm, gearchanging requires an eye on the rev counter to maintain pace and smoothness. Overall, the engine is relatively refined, and ride strikes a good balance between comfort and support, but if sector comparisons are made there are established players who have honed their offerings to higher levels as in the Ford Kuga and Nissan Qashqai. Nevertheless, the Korando LE represents an advancement for SsangYong and a company confidence that allows for a 5-year unlimited mileage warranty. There is also 5 years low interest finance and 5 years free servicing on this model to help re-establish the brand under its new ownership.

And when equipment levels are made with the competition, the Korando LE shines, having only satellite navigation on the extras list. Among the standard equipment in addition to what was previously listed are six airbags, automatic air conditioning, leather seats – heated in front with electric adjustment on the driver's, keyless entry, all-round electric windows and windscreen de-icer.

On the economy and environmental fronts, the model has a CO2 emissions of 159 gms/km and returns a combined fuel consumption of 47.1 mpg.

Overall, the Korando LE represents a major advancement for SsangYong and while the model may not be in the premier league of the sector, it is nevertheless a tempting proposition with all-round acceptable performance and exceptionally high specification levels. Further attractions are the warranty cover and the excellent Northern Ireland network of six SsangYong dealerships.

The special edition LE model is priced at £17,995 on-the-road and is in Group 19 of the new 50 category insurance ratings.