



Kia Cee'd (2007 - 2012)

The new ... ?

Car review | Any old grey car in any old grey parking space. Is it the new Nissan Almera? A Toyota Corolla? The next Seat Ibiza? It could be any one of them. Kia has vastly improved the quality and now wants to compete with the most popular models of the established order. Meet the new Kia Cee'd.

The Kia Cee'd could have been more than just any old grey car. At various car shows prototypes that appeared under the name "Ed" (E for European and D for Design) were so fresh that various European designers could have learnt a thing or two from them. To reduce costs details such as the large wheels, exciting curves and the sharp bonnet fell by the wayside. The flair of the "Ed" was lost when it was renamed as "Cee'd".

Modern

All the same the Cee'd has a strong and modern appearance. On top of that, the interior looks smart. It is considerably better finished and more logically placed than previous Kias.

Kia has used soft but durable materials for the Cee'd dashboard, with all the knobs placed where the driver would expect them. Most agreeable is a speedometer with a very precious calibration for lower speeds and a continually greater calibration as the speeds increase.



A large improvement is that the Korean manufacturer realizes that Europeans are larger than they are. The height adjustable seats have long backs. The headrests can be adjusted over large length thus actually contributing to the driver's safety. Unfortunately the seats in front are very short and are a right killer over long distances.

In comparison to similar cars the Cee'd has an

unusually long wheel base (8ft6) which translates into a lot of room at the front of the car. Space in the rear seat is also slightly greater than the average car from this class. Finally the boot space at 12 cubic feet is larger than usual.

As standard the Cee'd is equipped with a radio CD-player that has MP3 capacity (both playing MP3's from a CD-ROM as well as from an MP3-player portal), four airbags, ABS, remote central locking, electric windows, trip computer and alarm. All models except the basic "S" model are equipped with climate control.

Engines

The Cee'd offers the choice between a diesel and three different petrol engines. The diesel measures 1.6 litres and delivers 140 hp. The lightest petrol engine is a 1.4 litre with 109 hp. The test car was driven by the most powerful engine: the 2.0 litre which produces 143 hp.



After a cold start this power source experiences an unconventional distress. As the clutch is raised and the engine transfers power to the wheels the rpm falls. This happens with all cars, but with the Cee'd 2.0 the rpm falls so far down that it is tricky to move off without hopping. Also it appears as if the cold engine has cut out whereby it is unjustifiably restarted. These

problems are particularly noticeable when the car has been left for more than 24 hours.



Once the car has warmed up, the performance of the Cee'd is smart. Even so this most powerful engine does not make the Cee'd a powerful car. It all works - low driving noise, civilized fuel consumption, the works; however, a driver could expect more from such a large engine in this relatively compact car. This top model does not really feel like a top model.

Kia delivers a 2.0 litre engine for a very keen price but the performance is no better than that for a 1.6 or 1.8 engine from the competition, and that nullifies any price gain. A test drive with one of the lighter engines is thus strongly recommended.



Road handling

The road handling and steering are of conspicuously high quality. The steering is nicely heavy allowing the driver to really feel what the front wheels are doing. And although there is no real driving pleasure, the road handling is fine. The car's boundaries are massive and any sudden swerving action is captured in the chassis. On this point alone, the Cee'd delivers the promised Japanese-European quality at a Korean price.

The design is Japanese, the finish is European. The equipment is modern and moreover richer than many a competitor's car. Even the road handling endures the comparison with the leading brands. In short: this is not just any old grey car in any old grey car park. This is the new Kia Cee'd! ■



Conclusion

Kia promises Japanese/European quality at well-known low Kia prices. The 2.0 litre petrol engine cannot be said to really warrant this claim, as much lighter engines from other manufacturers perform just as well if not better. Even the short seats in the front of the car further highlight that this is not a European car.

On all other counts the car passes with flying colours.

