



Ford Kuga (2008 - 2012)

Here comes the talent

Review | Ford has a reputation to keep up. Every Ford, from the cheapest base model to the most expensive sports car, has sublime road holding. But now Ford introduces the Kuga: a so called Sports Utility Vehicle (SUV). As a rule such cars are overweight, have a high centre of gravity and other things that do not contribute to the driving qualities. Is the Kuga as talented as the other Fords?

Which talents should a good SUV have? Such a car must look tough, offer plenty of space, drive comfortably and be very safe. Although no one will ever go off road, the car should have proven itself once in the rough stuff.

Looks

The SUV is popular thanks to its rugged looks. Many drivers enjoy the feeling of driving a large, mighty car. The Ford Kuga is not an intimidating off roader that makes other cars move over just by appearing in their rear view mirror. But the raised bonnet and tall shoulder line make the Kuga look sturdy.



The under body protection is continued all the way to the bumpers, which gives the impression that the Kuga is very capable. Because the wheels are located on the extreme corners, the overhang is minimal and in theory the Kuga should be able to climb very steep ascents.

Space

Underneath the rugged exterior hides a comfortable cocoon. The space in the front of the Kuga is fine. Even with the optional sun roof installed head room leaves little to be desired. The (optional) leather seats are firm and can be adjusted in many ways. As it should be with a car like this, the high driving position gives a clear view over the road ahead. However, the feeling of controlling a mighty machine isn't really there.

Despite the fair size of the car, the room on the back seats is very limited. Compared to similar SUV's the Kuga offers less than average space in the back. The luggage compartment is large, but yet again not as large as usual for a car like this. The beautiful lines of the exterior take heaps out of the luggage space, which is shaped irregularly because of this. To transport big packages it is necessary almost to fold down the back seat almost every time.



According to the latest trend the tail gate of the Kuga can be opened in two separate parts. For big loads the whole rear door has to be opened. To allow for smaller luggage only the top half can be opened. However, this upper half is made so heavy that it takes almost as much force to open the whole boot lid. This defeats the purpose of having a split tail gate.

In the interior of the Kuga many standard Ford parts can easily be recognised. This means that the equipment is modern and on some points even innovative. The test car is equipped with a fine audio,

communications and navigation system. The latter uses a very recent map and even knows its way around newly built neighbourhoods where the concrete is still wet! Judging by the price, the trim level is excellent and the Kuga offers just about the same luxury as a normal road car with a similar price tag.



Comfort

That last thing also applies to the comfort level. At the moment of writing the Kuga is only available with a 2.0 litre four cylinder diesel engine which does its job very quietly. Just like a regular car! When put in numbers the power of 136 hp / 320 Nm seems inadequate for a large vehicle like this.



In real life, the Kuga performs very well and never disappoints. Of course this is not a sports car, but the

Kuga has no problem keeping up with the other traffic. When the driver is in a hurry, the Kuga know how to maintain a break neck pace. Thanks to the four wheel drive system wheel spin is rare, even in extreme weather. With a calm driving style, the fuel consumption as promised by Ford (6,4 litres per 100 km) can indeed be achieved.

Safety

Many people buy an SUV because they feel safe in such big cars. In many cases this is no more than just a feeling, because the huge weight and height of the car affect the road holding.

The Kuga really lives up to the good reputation of Ford. Just like the other Fords even this off roader drives exceptionally well. In most aspects the Kuga behaves like a normal car. This SUV will safely steer trough corners at frantic speeds where lesser sports cars would be in trouble!



After a long drive one weak point was found after all: because of the high weight and long springs, the Kuga can react with a certain sluggishness on bad roads. In that case the car feels very light. When a sudden change of direction is made, grip is very low. Only in this case a low, light weight passenger car still has the advantage.

Off road

The Ford Kuga is not meant as a pure off road vehicle and therefore has no off road technology. The approach and departure angles are larger than that of

a normal car, but the ground clearance is hardly any bigger. The standard tyres are meant for tarmac, not mud.

The Kuga does have a very short first gear. This is annoying in city traffic, because it requires a lot shifting gears. But when going off road, this makes the car extra strong and steep hills can be climbed with remarkable ease. This same short first gear makes it possible to apply engine braking when descending.



The (optional) automatic four wheel drive system is very effective. Normally the Kuga uses front wheel drive, but when needed the rear wheels will automatically assist. Thanks to this system the Kuga could even prove its talents off road.

Conclusion

Kudos to Ford! With the Kuga Ford welcomes a new talent in its ranks. The car meets all requirements of a modern SUV. The Kuga looks tough on the outside, but offers plenty of room and comfort on the inside.

The driving characteristics are excellent for an SUV. Road holding is almost as good as that of the other Fords. The diesel engine performs very well and is economic. Despite the simple off road technology the Kuga even convinces in light terrain. ■

Specifications

Ford Kuga (2008 - 2012) 2.0 TDCi Titanium

Size and weight

Length x width x height	444 x 184 x 171 cm
Wheelbase	269 cm
weight	1.613 kg
Trailer	unknown
Trailer - braked	2.100 kg
Fuel capacity	unknown
Luggage space	360/1355 l
Tyre size	235/55R17

Engine and performance



Capacity	1997 cc
Cylinders / valves	4/4
Max power	136 PS @ 4000 rpm
Max torque	320 Nm @ 2000 rpm
Drive	Four wheel drive
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	10.5 secs
topspeed	180 km/h
Average mileage	6.4 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	8.1 l / 100 km
Mileage extra urban	5.4 l / 100 km
CO2 emissions	169 gr / km

Price

Price	Â£ 22,500
Price base model	Â£ 20,500