



## Kia Sportage

### Divide and conquer

Review | What makes a good SUV? For starters, it should look tough and offer plenty of cabin space. Also, a good SUV should be capable both on-road and off-road. Judging by its sales figures, the Kia Sportage meets these requirements like no other. What will make the fourth generation of a Sportage a success?

"Divide and conquer", that's the secret of Kia. American carmakers think they know best and serve the whole world with their American product. If it doesn't succeed, they blame the customers rather than themselves.

Japanese carmakers do inform about European preferences but keep development in their own hands, even if it is limiting. European manufacturers develop cars for Europe and regard any overseas sales a nice bonus.



Korean carmaker Kia takes a different approach. Only the management is Korean. Everything, from the first sketch to production is outsourced to local parties. Therefore, the new Kia Sportage has been designed in Europe, developed in Europe, tested in Europe and it's even built in Europe. The base design can be used elsewhere, but it will be altered to suit the local preference for that region.

## Design

But... while most of the recent new Kia models look downright desirable, the design of the Sportage is less harmonious. Without a doubt it looks tough, but the relative dimensions seem to be off. For example: when seen from the side the front overhang is bigger than in the rear and therefore the bodywork seems to want to overtake the wheels. This looks odd and it affects off-road capabilities.



Also, the design isn't very original. The headlights are placed high on the bonnet, which reminds of the Subaru B9 Tribeca and Porsche Cayenne; two cars that aren't known for their beauty. And that's putting it mildly.

## Spec levels

On the inside, the Sportage does convince. Immediately the high-class materials and immaculate build quality stand out. The layout of the cabin gives a feeling of space and even abundance.

At first, the huge number of buttons is a bit intimidating, but thanks to the logical layout it all becomes clear quickly enough. That's a compliment, because the list of features is huge. The test car is the highest spec level and that means just about every luxury and safety feature that one expects on a car like this is available.



Also, Kia takes it one step further than usual. For example, the Sportage can warn about danger and brake if necessary. On top of that the system can distinguish pedestrians from other traffic and prioritise. The Sportage cannot only fully automatically park itself, but it can also automatically "unpark". The electrically cooled seats don't just cool the base of the seat but also the backrest. As well as in the front, USB sockets can be found in the rear to charge mobile devices. To list just a few examples.

The luxury spec levels come with a stereo by JBL. Regrettably, the sound quality leaves something to be desired when it comes to clarity. However, the sound quality is better than that of the average audio system and therefore the JBL option is still worth the extra money.



Active cruise control (automatically keep a safe distance from the car in front) and head-up display are the only features which are not available. An option one preferably disables is the active lane control. Instead of gently nudging the driver back on track when accidentally crossing the markings on the road, the computer continuously intervenes with the steering, and that's annoying.



## Handling

The space in the front and rear is okay. More important: the Sportage gives the driver the feeling of operating a mighty vehicle, and that's what makes cars like these so attractive. This isn't just thanks to the high seating position, but also thanks to the rigid body. The Sportage feels remarkably solid and has a certain dignity that lacks from most other cars in this

segment.

Handling is average. Because of the high centre of gravity there's some body roll when cornering, but that's usual with cars like these. Steering is of above average quality, which makes the Sportage easier to control at high speed or when going off-road.



## Petrol

The base model of the Sportage is fitted with a 1.6 litre "GDI" petrol engine, which can also be found in the smaller Kia models. And it shows. The 132 PS / 164 Nm will do, but that's all. The engine has to haul so much weight that it feels like always driving up hill. At the same time, the engine never protests and therefore the driver doesn't experience the Sportage 1.6 GDI to be underpowered.

A new engine for the Sportage is the "1.6 T-GDI", where "T" stands for turbo. Thanks to the turbo, this version develops 177 PS / 265 Nm. This doesn't merely provide the Sportage with the extra power the base versions lacks, it even delivers enough oomph for sporty driving. The optional automatic gearbox with double clutch ("DSC") makes the Sportage both more comfortable and even quicker.



During the test drives both the 1.6 GDI and T-GDI consumed 7 litres per 100 km (40 mpg) on a very demanding route (city traffic, mountain roads).

## Diesel

For the photo shoot the top spec car was used: the 2.0 litre diesel with a (traditional) automatic gearbox, four-wheel drive and GT-Line (sporty looks). Obviously, this strongest diesel engine on the price list has no problem with the 1,590 kg weighing Sportage but it doesn't make it a quick car. Instead, Kia uses the 185 PS / 400 Nm for extra comfort and refinement.

The test car used 8.6 litres per 100 km (33 mpg). Because this route included the same demanding route this is a fair score. More than that: the car was used to go off-road during which the four-wheel drive and the full power of the engine were utilised extensively.



## Conclusion

What's the secret of the success of the Kia Sportage? Listening to the customer. Kia doesn't only listen carefully to its local customers, it even outsources developing to local parties. In that way each car perfectly appeals to the local taste, and that approach works very well.

For the Kia Sportage this means daring looks, superb build quality and plenty of space. The Sportage offers all features common in this segment and then takes it one step further. The engines aren't innovative, but they do offer a fair combination of performance and efficiency. As it should be, this SUV is capable both on-road and off-road. ■



# Specifications

## Kia Sportage 2.0 CRDi 4wd automatic

### Size and weight



Length x width x height	448 x 186 x 164 cm
Wheelbase	267 cm
weight	1.590 kg
Trailer	750 kg
Trailer - braked	1.900 kg
Fuel capacity	62 l
Luggage space	491/1480 l
Tyre size	215/70R16

### Engine and performance



Capacity	1995 cc
Cylinders / valves	4/4
Max power	184 PS @ 4000 rpm
Max torque	392 Nm @ 1800 rpm
Drive	Four wheel drive
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	9.5 secs
topspeed	201 km/h
Average mileage	6.3 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	7.9 l / 100 km
Mileage extra urban	5.3 l / 100 km
CO2 emissions	166 gr / km

### Price

Price	Â£ 30,710
Price base model	Â£ 17,995