



Kia XCeed

Lucky shot

Review | Two facts about the Kia XCeed. First: the car was designed by accident. Second: now that the XCeed is a fact, Kia expects sales will exceed all other versions of the Ceed. How can a car be designed by accident? And how can this accidental design be successful?

The previous generation of the Kia Cee'd (then written with an apostrophe) was available as a hatchback, estate car and coupé. The demand for the coupé was slim. That's why Kia wanted a more popular type of vehicle to replace it with. So, the designers were asked to come up with an original replacement. As usual in the motoring industry, the designers came up with several proposals and management had to choose one.



Crossover

This time, management couldn't make a decision and thus it was decided to take two new body types into production. The first one is the "ProCeed", a so-called "Shooting Brake", which is an estate car with the sleek lines of a coupé. The second one is the "XCeed", where X is for "crossover". A crossover is a mix of an SUV (Sports Utility Vehicle or luxurious off-roader) and a regular hatchback. And this is how the XCeed distinguishes itself from the competition. Several brands dress up existing models in an adventurous outfit. The XCeed is far more than that! Only the front doors and wing mirrors are carried over from the other Ceed, other than that every single sheet of metal is unique for the XCeed.

The XCeed is taller (+5 cm) than a normal Ceed and offers more ground clearance (total of 184 mm), so that this adventurous looking model can actually handle rough surfaces. Next to that, the XCeed looks tougher. And that's what it's all about: according to research from Kia, 64% of buyers choose a crossover for its looks. Kia did its homework well, because compared to other crossovers the XCeed looks very good. Do pick one in a flashy colour, because in white or grey the magic is gone.

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Space and equipment

Next to its looks, the cabin space is also a reason to choose a crossover. Thanks to extra overhang in the front and back the XCeed is more spacious than the Ceed hatchback. This extra space mainly benefits the boot (now 426 litres, was 395 litres). The extra ground clearance is hardly noticeable when getting into the car. Once at the steering wheel it is noticeable that the XCeed is raised ever so slightly. Despite the fact that the cabin is the same height as that of a normal Ceed (remember: the front door is identical), the test driver just couldn't find a comfortable seating position. Taller drivers will hit the roof with the top of their head and are forced to move the backrest back. However, the space on the back seat is more than adequate.

To turn the XCeed into a more special car, the cabin upholstery has playful colours and patterns. The test car had yellow stitching and yellow panels on the dashboard. Tastes do differ, but the Autozine editor just loved this cabin!

Every Kia Ceed comes with a modern infotainment-system (audio, communication and satnav) and semi-self driving functions (driver assistants and driver's aid in case of emergency) and that also goes for the XCeed. Also, the XCeed is the first Kia that has digital instead of analogue gauges behind the steering wheel. The traditional speedometer and rev counter have been replaced by a display. This is easy to read, but Kia doesn't really utilise the extra possibilities a screen has to offer. The driver cannot choose from different layouts and

cannot rearrange the data the way he/she wants. Perhaps a software update will improve this in the future?



Handling

The purpose of a crossover is to offer the best of two worlds: the refinement and safe handling of a regular car with the space and tough looks of an off-roader. This is quite a challenge to actually realise.

Raising the XCeed was easy: by altering the suspension and mounting bigger wheels the ride height was increased. However, this also raised the centre of gravity. To compensate for this Kia had to adjust a lot: from the steering rack to the electronic stability system. The front has unique shock absorbers that handle small ripples in the road very well, while being extra firm to avoid "wobbling" of this tall body. Because Kia only changed the front suspension, the XCeed doesn't always behave harmoniously. At low speeds, short bumps are absorbed perfectly well, while larger obstacles (like speed bumps) can cause violent bangs throughout the car. In the corner the rear wheels can even step aside when the road is especially bumpy.



For this review three different versions of the XCeed were driven. Usually a different engine has a different weight which causes different handling, but this isn't the case with the XCeed. Kia did everything it could to make the XCeed, despite its height, safe and predictable; which is why the suspension is always firm. The XCeed brakes well, but a little more feeling in the braking pedal would have been nice. The XCeed only comes with front-wheel drive; four-wheel drive is not available.

Engines

Another reason to choose a crossover over an SUV is fuel economy. A tall car has more drag and thus the engine has to work harder to achieve the same performance while using more fuel. This means the XCeed should be more frugal than an SUV that delivers the same performance.

First the 1.4 litre four-cylinder 140 PS / 240 Nm petrol engine was tried. This can be combined with a 6-speed automatic, which works well. The automatic understands what the driver wants and therefore always shifts at exactly the right moment. The "1.4 GDi" performs adequately under all circumstances. In the city the XCeed is quick and agile, on the open road it's quiet and comfortable. The test drive cost 7.9 litres per 100 km (36 mpg). Despite a very demanding test route (city traffic, lots of mountain roads) that's a lot for a car like this.



In comparison the 1.6 litre petrol engine (204 PS / 265 Nm) was also tried. Because it is more powerful from lower engine speeds, it makes the XCeed feel more capable and mature. Of course performance is also better than that of the smaller engine, but in real life it is the ease with which the engine performs that makes it more attractive.

Finally, the XCeed diesel (136 PS / 280 Nm) was driven. This makes it painfully clear that Kia, like many carmakers, realises that diesel is on the way out. While petrol engines get better with every generation, diesel development seems to have come to a halt. Existing diesel engines get filters to make them cleaner and comply to the latest emissions standards, but when it comes to performance or refinement there's no noticeable improvement. Just like in the previous models from Kia, this diesel engine is calm (not quiet), powerful and frugal (6.4 litres per 100 km (44 mpg)). A version for the real mile muncher follows in 2020, then the XCeed will also be available as a plug-in hybrid.



Conclusion

When the Kia designers were looking for new and original models, they created an adventurous version of the Ceed just as an experiment. This experiment got so much attention, that Kia decided to actually take the "XCeed" into production.

The "X" in "XCeed" is for "crossover" and that means a mix of an off-roader and a regular car. As a general rule a crossover should combine the best of both worlds, but in this case that isn't so. The XCeed doesn't handle better than a real SUV. Although performance is decent with all three engines on the price list, they aren't more efficient than an SUV. In this respect Kia's other crossover, the Stonic, is a better product.

However, numbers are rational. When judging the XCeed from an emotional standpoint the conclusion differs. Next to crossovers from other brands the XCeed has even more attractive looks. Kia doesn't just dress up an existing car; the XCeed actually offers more ground clearance and therefore handles differently. Just like with every other Kia Ceed the XCeed offers plenty of luxury and safety features. The XCeed may be a lucky shot; this car has everything it takes to attract many new buyers and surpass the success of the other versions of the Kia Ceed. ■

Specifications

Kia XCeed 1.4 T-GDi 3 DTC

Size and weight



Length x width x height	440 x 183 x 150 cm
Wheelbase	265 cm
Kerb weight	1.275 kg
Trailer	600 kg
Trailer - braked	1.410 kg
Fuel capacity	50 l
Luggage space	426/1394 l
Tyre size	235/45R18

Engine and performance



Capacity	1353 cc
Cylinders / valves	4/4
Max power	140 PS @ 6000 rpm
Max torque	242 Nm @ 1500 rpm
Drive	front wheels
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	9.5 secs
Top speed	200 km/h
Average mileage	5.9 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	6.8 l / 100 km
Mileage extra urban	5.3 l / 100 km
CO2 emissions	134 gr / km

Price

Price	Â£ 25,195
Price base model	Â£ 20,795