

Motoring

HAS KIA XCEEDED?

By Tim Saunders

Call me shallow but it's the design of a car that gets me every time. And so it is with the Kia Xceed. I just can't take my eyes of its curvaceous rear. It takes me a few days to fully appreciate the boxier but nevertheless characterful front. I like the way that a good amount of space has been devoted to the beefy black mesh grille. This is also angled in a similar but more subtle way to those American muscle cars of the past. So this design is different to the competition and that's important.

Kia has created a car for a new market; the compact sports utility vehicle. For those who might be bored of their popular hatchbacks but find that traditional sports utility vehicles are a little too large, the Xceed is the solution, according to Kia.

Despite its flash styling the model tested does seem a little on the basic side. Listen to me... no longer do all round electric windows and air conditioning cut it. It's the lack of a sat nav and having to fold in the wing mirrors by hand that give me this feeling. Especially as the rain pours down and I have to park on the roadside. It's just one more thing you don't want to worry about. This is the basic model and these extra refinements can be added for more money.

Inside, it's spacious and there's a good size boot. The driving position is good and the seats are supportive. My first journey sees me twice stalling – embarrassing - but it's just down to the bite of the clutch compared to other cars I've been driving. On a cold day the engine feels lethargic until it's warmed up.

The cruise control is of the basic variety so although the driver can set it at say, 30mph, it won't automatically brake and accelerate. When the engine is worked hard there's an attractive rasp from the exhaust. During one trip into the New Forest, I realise that I'm in the wrong lane and waiting at the traffic lights indicate accordingly, but to my surprise the female motorist next to us is far from courteous. Shame but the Kia has enough power to teach her a lesson, manoeuvring safely in front of her. Whether it's a weekend thing or not I cannot tell but there are many discourteous, impatient motorists on the roads. Any picking on the Kia receive short shrift.

Tim Saunders is an advanced motorist and journalist. He has always been passionate about motoring and regularly reviews cars from the leading manufacturers. His first report on a BMW 520i was published in the Dorset Echo when he was 17 (just after passing his driving test) in 1995. He went on to become business and motoring editor at the Bournemouth Echo.



It's encouraging that this model is just a 1-litre petrol but if we were playing Top Trumps it would be pipped to the post by the likes of the Honda Civic 1.0T EX Sport Line MT, which boasts the following stats:

0 to 60mph: 10.6secs

Top speed: 124mph

Power: 126bhp

Economy: around 40mpg

CO2 emissions: 110g/km

However, the Honda loses on price at a considerably more **£27,435**.



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FACTS AT A GLANCE

Kia Xceed MY20 1.0 Petrol T-GDi 2 ADAP Eco

Price: £18,995

CO2 g/km: 124

Top speed: 112 mph

Power: 118bhp

0-60mph: 10.9 secs

Economy: Around 39 mpg

Watch the video at www.testdrives.biz