

Ssangyong: a very pleasing package

By Tim Saunders

I HAVE NEVER DRIVEN a SsangYong so I really don't know what to expect. Over the years I've seen a few on the roads but that's as far as it has gone. Until now.

When the Korando arrives my first impression is that it is a smart family SUV, perhaps a little similar to a Mitsubishi, nothing outstanding about it, quietly understated and no doubt quite capable.

The traditional metallic blue finish and slick alloy wheels hint that you should look closer. It's a very pleasing package. I'm testing this after driving the Kia Sportage, which is decidedly curvier and distinctly more fashionable to look at. But that's a shallow attitude. On opening the doors we are greeted with a stylish cream leather interior, which is a surprise because so often these days interiors are just black. Although this is pretty luxurious when we go blackberry picking it becomes clear that if any stain goes on this leather it will be a nightmare to

remove. This lighter interior really does brighten things up and helps compensate for the lack of a glass sunroof. It does feel very luxurious. There's even stitched leather of different colours around the automatic gearbox, which is a nice touch.

"I like the fitted mats," observes my wife, looking at the floor. "They're so much more practical than the ill-fitting floor mats you usually get." It's neat touches like this that set the SsangYong apart from the competition.

The driver's seat is easily adjusted by the push of a button but try as I might I cannot find my ideal position. I like to drive with straight arms and I just can't quite achieve that in the Korando. My left arm repeatedly favours the centre armrest while my right tries to get comfortable by resting on the driver's door - not at the same time...

At least I can find the cruise control though, that's easy to use - a definite improvement on the Kia because even after a week with that vehicle I still



could not find the cruise control. The trouble with the Korando's cruise control though is that it cannot be relied upon. I set it at 30mph and no sooner than I've done this it is quickly gathering speed and I have to apply the brake. No good for beating the speed cameras.

The automatic gearbox makes driving easy and there are paddle shifts either side of the steering wheel for more engaged driving.

During the summer heat wave we take it for a spin with the air conditioning on of course, to the South Downs, down country lanes where it feels at home. It's quite happy at low speeds and the ride is smooth. Push that accelerator and although it feels a little

lethargic, it does get a spurt on. However, progress can be a bit jerky especially from a standstill, which my wife doesn't like.

The best things about the Korando? The cooled and heated seats. In blisteringly hot summer temperatures being able to sit on cold leather is so appealing to me. And of course come winter when it is freezing, the heated seats will be just as welcome as will the heated steering wheel. This feature is usually reserved for expensive luxury vehicles such as Range Rovers so to find it on a sub-£30,000 car is quite a treat and this is where SsangYong scores highly. Value for money.



We're all looking more and more at the cash in our pockets these days and little luxuries like this help to soften the blow when you visit the petrol station.

FACTS AT A GLANCE

**SSANGYONG
KORANDA C300
ULTIMATE SPEC**

Price:
£29,445 OTR

Engine:
1.5-litre petrol turbo

0 to 60mph:
12secs

Economy:
40mpg

Power:
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