

By **Tim Saunders**

Hybrids improve their mode

HYBRIDS are constantly improving. The Kia Sportage GT Line reinforces this fact. I take it for a trip to Jersey where the tight country lanes and island speed limit that does not exceed 40mph provides perfect conditions to put it through its paces. We drove to Poole to catch the Condor ferry and so were able to cruise at 70mph on the M27. All good and competent. My only criticism is that I cannot find the cruise control and even at the end of the test it escapes me. There are however, paddleshifts either side of the steering wheel for more engaging driving, if required. As we wait in the queue to board the ferry, EV mode kicks in, which means that emissions are cut to zero. I half expect the car alarm to go off during the crossing but this does not happen either on the outbound or return journey. Arriving at St Helier, EV mode continues to delight. It is necessary to use the sat nav to find our way round the island but it quickly becomes apparent that this is going to be problematic. At first attempt, the system just doesn't recognise any Jer-

sey-related search. So we have to reassess our search terms to nurse the system along to try to help us. It takes us 15 minutes to finally find the name of the hotel we are looking for. This problem rears its ugly head every time we have a new destination to find on the island, but thankfully, it does eventually play ball. The directions are generally reliable but little warning is given for making turnings, which causes challenges for the driver. Other than that, the Sportage can't be faulted for its efficiency, ride comfort or quality of fittings. All occupants are happy throughout any journey and the large panoramic glass sunroof is a necessity on a hot summer's day.

Enhanced Externally, it looks the part, too. I like the purposeful front, no doubt enhanced by the black finish. The boot is large enough to fit our luggage with ease and the electrically operated boot-lid is easy to use. As are the power folding wing mirrors. While driving down a particularly narrow lane, we come to an abrupt stop to wait for a mother pheasant and her chicks as they desperately try



to cross the road but make a complete hash of it so we have to carefully herd them with our car. Fortunately, there's no oncoming traffic until just after this event. Immediately afterwards as we make our way

round the tight bend, an oncoming taxi refuses to reverse down the hill. I therefore have to rely on the very useful reversing camera to slowly reverse up the hill out of his way. Once this is

over and we finally manage to make our way down the hill we discover that he could very easily have reversed down into a lay-by. Thankfully, our travels around the island from St Heli-

er to St Aubin are less eventful and I am able to park on the roadside without a problem, and we are extremely grateful for the fast-working air conditioning as the outside temperatures reach the high 30s.



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Power: 226bhp
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