

2012[62] KIA Sportage KX3 CRDi 6-Spd Automatic 5 Dr SUV 4x4 REVIEW

The fourth-generation Kia Sportage uses its predecessor's strengths to push it towards the top of its class..!



Arguably the car that has done the most to change Kia's brand image, the third-generation Sportage (2010-2016) showed Kia could make attractive, stylish and great value cars all backed up by a seven-year warranty. The new, fourth-generation car takes these key strengths and improves on them in a number of ways, pushing the Sportage towards the top of the small SUV class.

It's a rival for the Nissan Qashqai, Ford Kuga and Mazda CX-5, and it also squares up to its sister car – the Hyundai Tucson. It ranks as one of the better-made cars in its class, and while it may trail the Mazda CX-5 for outright space, the Sportage is one of the roomier small SUVs. It falls a little short of the Kuga and, once again, the CX-5 for handling, but the Sportage is by no means a boring car to drive. Its combination of quick steering, supple ride and decent body control means the Kia Sportage is one of the best all-rounders in its class.

The old Sportage was styled by ex-Audi designer Peter Schreyer and he oversaw the design of the current, fourth-generation car too. While some may say the previous car was slightly better looking, there's no doubt the current Sportage is a stylish design and maintains its reputation for standing out in the small SUV segment. Thanks to Schreyer's influence, the Sportage has a slightly German look to its styling, sporting similarities to German SUVs like the BMW X1 and Volkswagen Tiguan. From some angles, there's even a touch of Porsche Cayenne in its looks.

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2012[62] KIA Sportage KX3 CRDi 6-Spd Automatic 5 Dr SUV 4x4 REVIEW

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The CAR



The previous generation Sportage, launched in 2010, transformed Kia's brand image in the UK. Kia waved goodbye to its perception of being a car company best known for producing, cheaply made, bland cars and hello to an image of building quality cars with stylish looks. It was also one of the first Kias that commanded a slight price premium over some rival small SUVs and helped Kia rise above value brands and mix it with volume, mass-market companies like Ford and Nissan.

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The Sportage pulls ahead of its rivals by coming with an industry-leading seven-year, 100,000-mile warranty. It also comes with a choice of two- and four-wheel drive, plus a range of petrol and diesel engines, and six-speed manual, six-speed auto and seven-speed dual-clutch automatic gearboxes. Despite all engines being tweaked to offer better fuel economy and lower CO2 emissions for the fourth-generation Sportage, it still lags behind its competition.

Best 4x4s and SUVs to buy

Go for the all-wheel drive Sportage 2.0 CRDi diesel with 134bhp and combined economy is 40.4mpg. The Kia's TAX is £30 a year.



Engines, performance and drive

Thanks to sharp steering, the Sportage drives well and hides its high stance with good composure in the bends.

The current, fourth-generation Sportage doesn't just have new styling but also a new platform. Shared with the Hyundai Tucson, the Sportage feels good on the move – it has lots of grip through corners and the suspension soaks up the bumps well. There is a fair amount of body roll but the car never feels cumbersome and is a big improvement on its predecessor.

The good chassis is mated to great steering, too. For the new Sportage, Kia engineers moved the electric steering motor and this has given the Sportage steering that is accurate and sharp. It also has a good amount of feedback, allowing you to feel the road surface through the steering wheel, which helps when judging cornering speeds and placing the car on the road. It's a massive enhancement from the old Sportage. However, for outright enjoyment, the Mazda CX-5 and Ford Kuga are better choices – they offer just a little more fun on twisty roads.

A high-set driving position and decent forward visibility make the Sportage very easy to drive around town. The small windows and thick roof pillars do spoil all-round visibility a little, especially at the rear, but that isn't a huge criticism.

For those venturing off-road or wanting all-year round grip, the four-wheel drive Sportage models are the best options. All-wheel drive is available on the 2.0-litre diesel models wearing the 'KX' badge and on the 1.6 T-GDi and 2.0 diesel GT-Line. In most situations, all-wheel drive Sportage models drive in two-wheel drive mode and can send 40 per cent of its power to the rear wheels should the front wheels lose grip. There's also a lock mode to keep all four wheels turning if necessary.

Engines

There's a choice of four engines. The range starts with the 1.6 GDI petrol that has 130bhp. Overall it feels fairly lively at low speeds around town, but becomes a bit breathless on the motorway when overtaking.

2012[62] KIA Sportage KX3 CRDi 6-Spd Automatic 5 Dr SUV 4x4 REVIEW

• **Best crossovers**

Reserved only for the sportier GT-Line, there's a brand new 1.6-litre turbocharged petrol option. It only comes with four-wheel drive and with 174bhp and 265Nm of torque, on paper it sounds good. However, while it is the most refined of all the Sportage engines, it's not as punchy as we would expect. It's also not terribly efficient with the six-speed manual version returning a claimed 37.2mpg on the combined cycle and emitting 177g/km of CO₂. The seven-speed dual-clutch auto improves those figures slightly (37.7mpg and 175g/km), though.

For the best all-round flexibility and blend of performance and efficiency, the diesels are the better options. With 114bhp, the 1.7-litre CRDi diesel looks underpowered compared with the 1.6 petrol but its pulling power is much stronger and consequently it feels more sprightly. For motorway mileages, the 1.7 is a better option than the petrol too as it runs more efficiently at constant revs and speed.

If you plan on doing a lot of towing or general load-lugging, the 2.0-litre diesel engine is the better option. It comes with 134bhp or 182bhp and a six-speed manual; if you want an automatic Sportage the only option is the 2.0-litre. There's the choice of a six-speed conventional automatic or one of Kia's new seven-speed dual-clutch automatics. Both are decent gearboxes but the dual-clutch (designed to make crisp, quick gear changes) doesn't shift between gears quite as quickly as it should and definitely not as rapidly as a DSG gearbox in a Skoda Yeti or a Volkswagen Tiguan.

MPG, CO₂ and running costs

Sportage ranks as above average for running costs and is predicted to hold its value well

Despite price rises of between £400 and £1,200 the new Sportage offers good value for money in the class thanks to strong equipment levels. Its seven-year, 100,000-mile warranty is not only the best in its segment but also in the industry. Kia dealers also offer fixed-price servicing packs for three and five years allowing owners to manage their budgets.

For perspective owners aiming to keep costs down, the front-wheel drive models are the better bets – and in particular the models fitted with the 1.7-litre diesel – steer clear of the all-wheel drive models as their economy is naturally worse and their CO₂ emissions higher.

Despite fuel economy and CO₂ emissions being tweaked for the current Sportage, most of the car's nearest rivals are more frugal and cleaner – and, consequently, cost less to run and tax. The 1.7 CRDi leads the Sportage range for efficiency, offering (depending on spec) 61.4mpg and 119g/km. That's a decent return but not quite up with the equivalent Nissan Qashqai which gets 74.8mpg and emits 94g/km of CO₂.

The four-wheel drive 2.0 CRDi (134bhp) returns 54.3mpg and 139g/km, but the 1.6 petrol (42.2mpg/156g/km), 1.6 turbo petrol (37.7mpg/175g/km) and high-power 182bhp 2.0 CRDi auto (44.8mpg/166g/km) are a little disappointing.

Interior, design and technology

The Sportage's bold exterior styling is contrasted with a mature, spacious and well-made cabin

When it comes to the new Sportage's design, the current car isn't a massive change from its predecessor – the 2010-2016 Sportage. That car was designed by ex-Audi man Peter Schreyer and the car's bold styling aged well.

The new Sportage takes the old car's styling and moves it on a stage. So there's still the sloping roof line and bulging arches, but the rear end is a little more svelte and the front wears Kia's '2.0' look. Glance quickly and the new Sportage looks like a mini Porsche Cayenne – which is no bad thing.

On the inside, the Sportage mixes it with the class's best. It is full of soft-touch plastics and the buttons and knobs all feel of very good quality; it's only if you look hard lower down the dashboard that you find

2012[62] KIA Sportage KX3 CRDi 6-Spd Automatic 5 Dr SUV 4x4 REVIEW

slightly cheaper plastics used. The cabin's design is mature, if not particularly stylish, and full of tech. All cars, bar the entry-level '1' get a touchscreen.

The range is easily arranged in 1, 2, 3 and 4 levels (and KX-1, KX-2, KX-3 and KX-4 for the all-wheel drive versions). The entry-level '1' comes with 16-inch alloys, front fog lights with a cornering function, electric and heated door mirrors, a leather-trimmed steering wheel, air conditioning, Bluetooth with music streaming and USB and AUX ports.

'2' adds 17-inch wheels, a seven-inch touchscreen navigation system with rear-view camera, roof rails, privacy glass, powered lumbar support on the driver's seat, electrically folding door mirrors with LED indicators, rear parking sensors, auto lights and wipers, an auto-dimming rear-view mirror, dual zone automatic air conditioning and a cooled glovebox.

'3' adds heated front and rear black leather seats, upgraded speakers with sub-woofer and a TFT display between the dials, while '4' adds bi-xenon headlights, front parking sensors, keyless entry and start, a panoramic roof, LED rear lights, 10-way adjustable electric driver's seat and eight-way electric passenger seat and a heated steering wheel.

'GT-Line' fits between '2' and '3' and has sportier bodywork, 19-inch alloys and much of the '3' and '4' specification. And for a short while, there's a 'First Edition' which comes with parking assist, a powered tailgate, wireless phone charging and metallic paintwork.

Sat-nav, stereo and infotainment

The Sportage can be equipped with a seven- or eight-inch touchscreen navigation system, which comes with connectivity services. An upgraded JBL stereo with sub-woofer, external amp and front centre speaker is standard on '3' and 'KX-3' and above.

Practicality, comfort and boot space



`Spacious interior and decent boot make Sportage a good choice for families`

2012[62] KIA Sportage KX3 CRDi 6-Spd Automatic 5 Dr SUV 4x4 REVIEW

Like all small SUVs in the class, the Sportage only comes with five doors and, like most of its rivals, a raised ride height means you climb into the Sportage rather than down.

Once inside, the elevated driving position feels good. There's clear forward visibility but the narrow side windows and thick rear pillars mean visibility out of the rear isn't the best. Happily, parking sensors and a parking camera are standard from '2' upwards.

The Sportage doesn't offer a huge number of cubbies. There's a large glovebox, two cup holders and big door bins but these spaces will soon fill up and there are no clever places to hide extra items.

Size

The Sportage is of average size in the class. At 4,480mm long it is shorter than the Ford Kuga (4,524mm) but longer than the Nissan Qashqai (which measures 4,377mm). It's also wider than both at 1,855mm wide.

Leg room, head room and passenger space

You can fit three people comfortably in the rear of the Sportage – even though the middle seat passenger has to position their feet either side of the transmission tunnel. There's excellent kneeroom and decent headroom despite the sloping roof-line. There are isofix points in the two outer seats for child seats and one particular feature that marks out the Sportage are its reclining rear seats offering an extra bit of comfort in the back.

Boot

The Sportage has an averagely-sized boot for the class. It's of a good shape, and the load lip is low and flat (making it easy to slide items in). At 491 litres, the Sportage boot is comfortably larger than that of the Ford Kuga and Nissan Qashqai. However, if you're after much more space, the Sportage cannot compete against the Mazda CX-5, which has a 503-litre boot.

The Sportage does have some good touches though. There's a large under floor storage area that can store the parcel shelf too.

Reliability and Safety

Safety kit is good and the seven-year warranty is class-leading

Kia is working hard on improving the level of safety kit it offers on its models – and the Sportage is one of the first cars to show this. Standard safety is comprised of Trailer Stability Assist, Hill-start Assist, Downhill Brake Control and cruise control with limiter. '2' adds Lane-Keep Assist, automatic high-beam and speed limit information while top-spec '4' features Autonomous Emergency Braking and Blind Spot Detection with Rear Cross Traffic Alert.

Euro NCAP has tested the Sportage and gave it a five-star safety rating. The car was praised for its ability to protect passengers of all statures in all seats and its side-on collision protection. It scored 71 per cent for its active safety assist technologies.

Warranty

Just like all Kia models, the Sportage range is covered by an industry-leading warranty that lasts seven years or 100,000 miles (whichever comes first). The fourth-generation Sportage, launched in January 2016, hasn't appeared in a Driver Power survey before (the previous model was ranked in 122nd place out of 200 in 2015) and will be ranked later in 2016 when the results are published.

Servicing

The service schedule for the Sportage is every 12 months or 20,000 miles, which means bills shouldn't be too high. You can fix the cost of servicing thanks to a package that Kia offers for the Sportage: the first

2012[62] KIA Sportage KX3 CRDi 6-Spd Automatic 5 Dr SUV 4x4 REVIEW

three services are covered for £329 including VAT (with a maximum mileage limit of 11,000 per year), or the first five services for £609. This represents very good value for money and is definitely worth taking up.

Conclusion

A long warranty and lots of happy customers

The Sportage KX-3 has a good record and Kia as a brand performed very well, finishing fifth out of 26 manufacturers. You also get the reassurance of a seven-year, 100,000-mile warranty, whereas Nissan and Skoda provide only three years or 60,000 miles of cover. The Sportage scored five stars out of five in Euro NCAP's industry standard crash tests, and all models come with six airbags and an electronic stability control system to reduce the likelihood of skidding, spinning or losing control when braking, accelerating and cornering.. All Sportages come with alloy wheels, all-round electric windows, air-conditioning, DAB radio, a Bluetooth hands-free phone connection and plenty more.

Upgrading to 2 specification adds bigger wheels, satnav, a reversing camera and rear parking sensors, automatic lights and wipers and lane keeping assist.

Go for 3 spec and the wheels grow in size again, the seats become heated and wrapped in leather rather than cloth and there's an extra USB charging point for rear-seat passengers.

CAR DATA

Vehicle Economy

Fuel Type DIESEL

CO2 Band I

Extra Urban MPG 47.9

CO2 Emissions 183 (g/km)

Urban Cold MPG 31.7

Combined MPG 40.4

Vehicle Performance

Engine CC 1995 cc

Driving Axle ALL - PERMANENT

Number of Cylinders 4

Bore 84

Aspiration TURBO

Fuel Type DIESEL

Torque RPM 1800

Max Speed MPH 112

Nominal CC 2.0 L

Drive Type 4X4

Power Delivery NORMAL

Stroke 90

Power BHP 134.0

Power RPM 4000

Acceleration (0-60 MPH) secs 11.6

Vehicle Dimensions

Height 1645 mm

Length 4440 mm

Width 1855 mm

Additional Data

Intro Date 2010-09

Range Description SPORTAGE (SL)

Cab Type NA

Termination Date Body Shape NA

Gross Vehicle Weight 2140 kg

Load Length Number of Axles 2

Payload Volume

Type Approval Category M1

Market Sector Code AB

Visibility Date 17/09/2010

System Setup Date 17/09/2010

Gross Combined Weight Gross Train Weight

Kerb Weight 1676 kg

Number of Seats 5

Payload Weight Rigid - Artic RIGID

Unladen Weight

2012[62] KIA Sportage KX3 CRDi 6-Spd Automatic 5 Dr SUV 4x4 REVIEW

Wheel Base **SHORT WHEELBASE**

Engine Model Description **D4HA**

Engine Location **FRONT**

Engine Make **KIA**

Euro Status **5**

Cylinder Arrangement **INLINE**

Number of Valves per Cylinder **4 Valve**

Gear **DOHC**

DVLA Description Country of Origin **KOREA**

Torque (lb ft) **236.0**

Torque (Nm) **320.0**

Urban Cold L/100km **8.9**

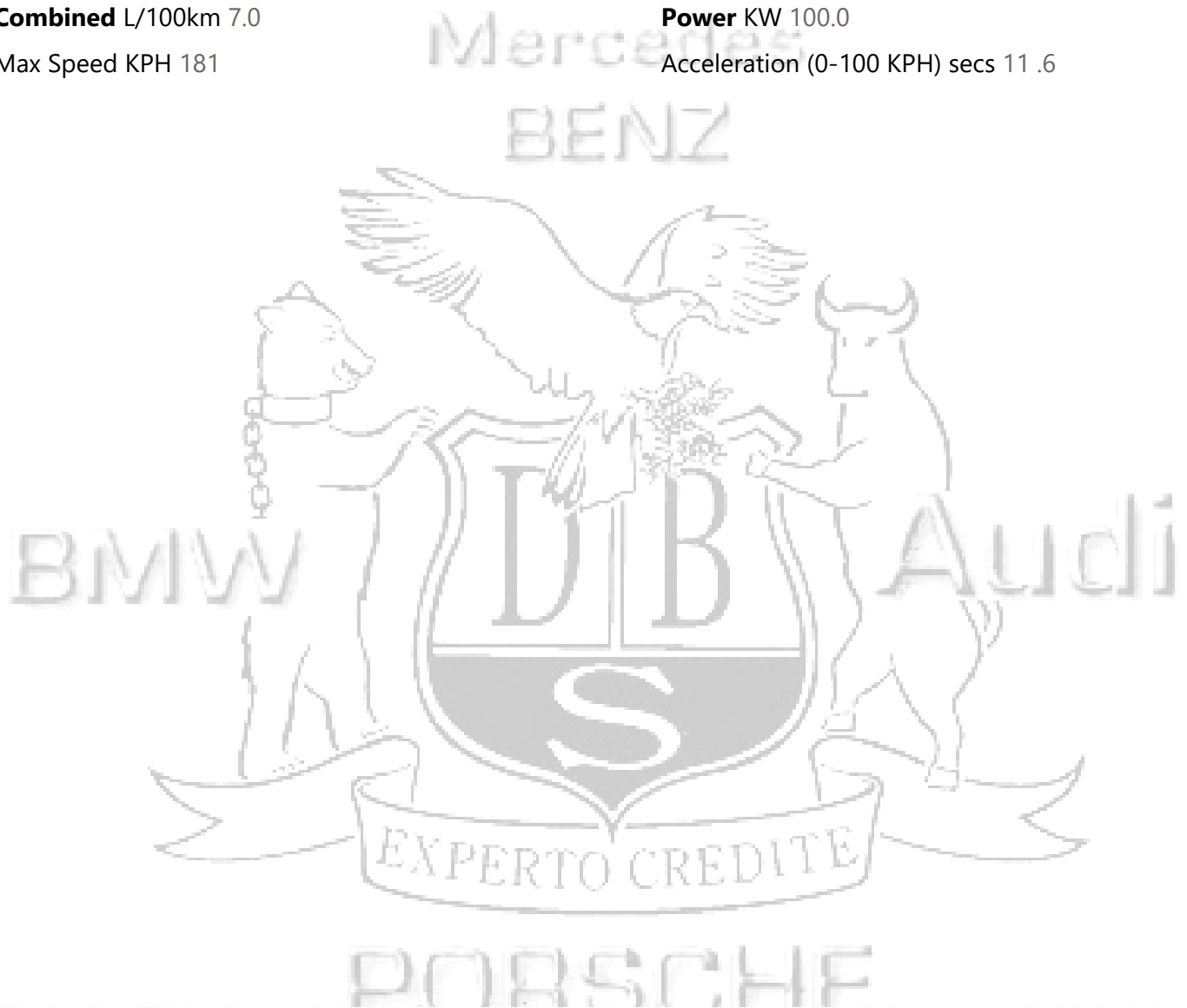
Extra Urban L/100km **5.9**

Combined L/100km **7.0**

Power KW **100.0**

Max Speed KPH **181**

Acceleration (0-100 KPH) secs **11 .6**



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