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Hyundai Santa Fe seven seater – road test

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The Hyundai Santa Fe Premium SE large SUV
...test-driven by Robin Roberts (and Miles Better News Agency).

The Hyundai Santa Fe has been the bedrock of the brand since launched in 2001, but it's no dinosaur.

The fourth generation of this highly popular large SUV is packed with the latest features and choices to please any family with the emphasis on enjoyment and living.



Split over four trim levels the price range is £33,425 to £43,295 and there are 15 versions of the Hyundai Santa Fe with five or seven seats.

They all use a 200 hp four-cylinder 2,199 cc turbodiesel engine and have six-speed manual and automatic transmissions choices plus an eight speed auto option and with the choice of 2WD and 4WD models.

Using a modern turbodiesel engine to keep down costs, the owner can select between front or four wheel drive, manual or two automatic transmissions and there is a simple graded trim structure - and all get the very good five-years unlimited mileage warranty, for reassuring ownership once you drive out of the showroom.



We tested the range-topping model on this occasion, and the beefy and economical 2.2 litre engine with its eight-speed sequential automatic and manual mode proved very miserly and yet delivered good performance for something weighing almost 1.9 tonnes.

The engine could be noisy when its four-cylinders were pushed to perform but generally it was quiet and always very smooth, both in power delivery and through the eight gears. Moving to manual mode made little difference except when you held a ratio for overtaking and changes were still silky up or down the transmission.

We averaged just over 40 mpg but at times on motorways it was nudging 50 mpg without stress or strain. When you wanted to get moving on main roads the economy dropped to mid-30s.



The Santa Fe Premium SE is a big car but it has all the aids to give it small car agility. Steering and brakes are faultless, its turning circle is good, and there are many sensors and cameras to ease parking.



On the move a comprehensive safety package includes radar protection for traffic warnings to the front and sides, active cruise control, traction assistance and hill descent as well as uphill assist.

The ride quality is very good despite the 19-inch alloys at each corner, but they do generate noises on bad surfaces. Off road it's a competent car which will be limited more by the driver's nerves and ability rather than the car's capabilities.

The plethora of secondary controls need familiarisation but the most commonly used are close to hands and fingers on the wheel-spokes or central console and the main instruments' display can be changed at will to emphasise modes, and they are all reasonably large and very clear. A multi-function infotainment display atop the fascia is big and clear.



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The heating and ventilation system is really up to task of filling the big cabin with selected air and distribution and it's backed up with powered windows and sunroof on the Premium SE specification, and it's a surprisingly quiet heating and ventilation system when working.

Oddments room is good for a family car with big bins and console compartments and even those in the back should have no trouble storing items. The big loadbed opens from just about knee-height, it's flat and wide and its length simply increases with the offset split rearmost back seats folded away. They are not particularly easy to erect or climb into and legroom they give is modest and suitable only for children but the five-seat configuration is very roomy.

Access to front and middle row seats is very good once you get used to stepping up into the cabin, head and shoulder room is good and visibility is excellent, helped by very good, wide and long range headlights, turning sidelights, follow-me delayed dipped lights and big wipers both ends. The wash was also powerful.

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Ride quality was uniformly good over any surface save the very worst potholes which would challenge any car, it gripped well and had a near neutral balance to the handling, while it responded quickly and safely to direction changes.

VERDICT

The fit, finish and quality inside the Hyundai Santa Fe Premium SE is a worthy rival to the best from the UK, Sweden or Germany and demands consideration when the time comes to change your SUV.

For: Very comfortable, roomy for five passengers, easy to drive, good power and economy, refined and sophisticated with good trim and finish, good warranty.



Against: Expensive to buy and tax, rear 6/7 seats have restricted access, some road noises and busy sounding engine at high revs.



Mini Milestones and Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

Hyundai Santa Fe, Premium SE, seven seat SUV.

Price: £43,295.

Mechanical: Four cylinder, 2.2 litre, 200 hp, 440 Nm (325 lb.ft) of torque from 1,750 rpm, turbodiesel, eight speed auto with 4WD.

Performance: 127 mph, 0-62 mph 9.3 seconds.



Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 47.1 mpg (40.3 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 164 g/km, VED new rate from April First Year £855 then Standard rate £145 + £310 annual supplement for five years as it costs over £40k, BiK company car tax rate from April 37%.

Insurance Group: 28.

Warranty: Five years/unlimited miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,770 mm (15.65 ft), W 1,890 mm (6.20 ft), H 1,703 mm (5.59 ft), boot/load space 547 - 1,625 litres (19.32 - 57.39 cu.ft), braked towing weight 2,000 kg (4,409 lb), five doors/seven seats.