



Latest Kia Sportage, in PHEV form – First Impressions, also Kia News

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The new Kia Sportage PHEV plug-in hybrid first drive.

By Robin Roberts (and Miles Better News Agency).

Kia has sharpened its attack on the business sector and introduced a Plug-in Hybrid Electrified addition to its Sportage family-friendly SUV range launched just a few months ago.



Some models will qualify for a very low 8% for the current Benefit in Kind company car tax rate and lower than most rivals which come with a 12% penalty and total cost of ownership will be lower than other Sportage electrified models. The introduction of the latest Kia Sportage PHEV means it now sells ten electrified models in the UK which account for almost one-in-three registrations in dealerships with nine different powertrain choices for buyers.

In line with the rest of the best selling Sportage range, the PHEVs come in GT-Line, grades 3 and 4 and top GT-Line S. They use the same 1.6 litre petrol engine with electric motor which together produce 261 bhp, 350 Nm (258 lb.ft) torque and are good for 119 mph maximum and 0 - 60 mph in 7.9 seconds with potential range on full tank and fully charged battery of 252 miles.





AWD is standard on the PHEV and has been developed to produce a new e-handling technology to enhance grip through corners, but top versions also get a new Terrain-mode setting to optimise off-road performance and safety on wintry roads.

Paul Philpott, president and CCO of Kia UK said in a statement, "Previous generations of the Sportage have always been essential to our plan for sustainable fleet and business growth.

The Plug-in Hybrid Sportage boasts a low 8% BiK rate for the current tax year with just 25 g/km emissions and the ability to travel 43 miles on electric power which produces lower running costs than many rivals and offers significant savings to fleet operators and drivers."

Kia says that the development of the Sportage PHEV means there are currently no plans for a pure battery model but a concept BEV has been shown which is likely to appear in showrooms in a few years alongside the battery powered EV6 sports car and forthcoming e-Niro compact MPV.

It expects the new Sportage PHEV model to lift the fleet split to 63% from 58% at the moment for Kia UK sales with the Sportage GT-Line taking 40% of registrations, the mid-range models some 25% each and the top model a niche 10%.

The 1.6 litre petrol four-cylinder engine produces up to 178 bhp and the electric motor another 90 bhp and the six-speed automatic transmission has been specifically tuned for the PHEV model and is also used in the mild-hybrid version. The on-board charger is rated at 7.2 KW and the 13.8 kWh battery gives a 43 miles battery range overall, but possibly 48 miles on an urban cycle, with recharge time from 10% to 100% of 1 hr 45 mins.



The newcomer is fitted with the same specifications at the rest of the Sportage line up so it has a distinctive twin-screen display and a host of creature comforts and advanced infotainment and sound systems, with full integration of smartphone features.

The entry level GT-Line goes from £38,395, the '3' grade begins at £39,595, the '4' grade at £41,795 and the top GT-Line S is £43,795 for starters. The newcomers are an insurance group higher than stablemates.

First Impressions:



For our comparatively short 55-miles first drive with the Sportage PHEV we decided to stick with electric power as far as we could and it worked out very well with over 40 miles passing before the petrol engine kicked in when the system detected it needed to boost the battery.



The internal combustion engine did assist when overtaking but the ev mode was sufficient for our journey of country lanes, main roads and short spell on a motorway. What is memorable as with all evs. is the near silence when operating in the eco mode.

There are a few whining noises but they are muted and you soon forget its running on battery power alone. It's ridiculously simple to switch between modes with a button behind the automatic drive selector and it was very responsive.

The AWD system has given the Sportage a, well, sporting, feel to the handling on twisting tracks and it immediately responded to changes of direction, gripped very well and gave good feedback through steering and brakes.

The non-electric Sportage creature comforts continued to be enjoyed with the newcomer



and it's a genuine family car with good room for occupants and their luggage, or bits and pieces at weekends.

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But its advanced technical specification means it also does the business in the week for a lot less than you might pay with a rival and with every cost rising that has to be good news to recharge your finances.



Business News Panel

Kia is the number one best-selling car brand in the UK so far this year, according to the latest figures from the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders.

As the Korean brand prepares to launch its latest Sportage Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicle it was celebrating the sale of 32,119 units in the first quarter, a 7.7 per cent overall market share - a record breaking performance.

Kia UK Sales Director Steve Hicks said that while every manufacturer was struggling with



many issues it was fortunate that Kia had anticipated the supply shortage in semi-conductors and had built up stocks while its model range is comparatively smaller than many.

“It also helps that Kia makes a lot of its own components and does not rely on external suppliers for everything, and it moves them around the world in its own fleet of transporter ships so it escaped the constraints on capacity.”

He concluded by saying that Kia UK is going into Q2 and Q3 with 50,000 advance orders and that would take them up to September for some models and certain models would not be available until early next year.

“We have gone from 12 days waiting to 12 weeks, but our customers appreciate what they are getting.”