

New age

BY JOE SAGE

We had driven the new Kia Sportage at its launch event just three months prior, and we were eager to get our hands on it again. This vehicle has been with us since the arrival of Kia in America for 1994, so it demonstrates the brand's maturation process as dramatically as anything in the lineup. The third-generation Sportage had already become crisp, handsome and contemporary. This fourth-gen effort builds on that, with well-evolved three-dimensional body language sure to take it into the future with a very solid footing.

The new body—both elegant and muscular, carrying the essence of the prior version but clearly a whole new direction—is best seen in person, with a full walkaround, or better yet, in motion, which is where it belongs. The 2017 Kia Sportage is ready for any active duty you can throw its way. Our sample here is a top trim SX Turbo, pumping 240 horses (and 260 lb-ft of torque) through either the front or all four wheels. (The only thing ours was lacking was AWD, \$1500 we would spend in a heartbeat. In addition to the added traction on pavement or off, it gives you a bit more ground clearance, with better approach/breakover/departure

angles [the approach angle is most dramatic, 67.6 percent greater than the FWD model].)

At the entry end of the scale, an LX with FWD weighs as much as 600 pounds less and hits the 30 MPG mark with its 181-horse naturally aspirated four. The lineup starts at \$22,990, although if you option it up (which you can to quite a degree), you do narrow the price and weight gaps,

Speaking of a very solid footing, Sportage has its wheels pushed wide and to the corners, great for paved handling or mild off-roading, and giving it an aggressive stance. The stance is no facade, either—this crossover's power-to-weight ratio gives it such potent off-the-line performance, we quite noticeably chirped the tires several times without even trying (one more thing that would be all the better in the AWD version).

We have a habit of liking a lot of 7-passenger SUVs even though we don't need one—maybe for power or tow capacity, but often just because style and balance work so well at that size. Kia Sportage nails it at compact size. It delivers 90 percent of what most people need in a crossover at any size, whether head count, cargo capacity, towing ability, power, off-pavement ability or all of the above. And it does this all at Kia's reasonable purchase price (and with affordable service prices, if you ever even need that, what with their 10-year/100,000-mile powertrain warranty and number two JD Power Initial Quality rating, behind only Porsche). Put it all together, and this is a pretty tough smaller crossover package to beat. ■

2017 KIA SPORTAGE SX TURBO FWD

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|---------------------|---|
| ENGINE / DRIVETRAIN |2.0L Turbo GDI / FWD |
| HORSEPOWER/TORQUE |240 hp / 260 lb-ft |
| TRANSMISSION |6-spd auto / drive mode select |
| SUSPENSION |F: MacPherson strut & stabilizerR: Multi-link |
| STEERING |Motor power-assist rack and pinion |
| BRAKES |RE 12.6 / R 11.9 disc |
| WHEELS |7.5J x 19 alloy |
| TIRES |P245/45R19 / temp spare |
| GROUND CLEARANCE |6.4 in |
| WEIGHT |3666-3898 lb |
| SEATING CAPACITY |5 |
| LEGROOM |FR 41.5 in / R 38.2 in |
| CARGO VOLUME |30.7 / 60.1 cu.ft |
| TURNING CIRCLE |34.8 ft |
| FUEL / CAPACITY |87 regular / 16.4 gal |
| MPG |21/26/23 city/hwy/comb |

BASE PRICE **\$32,500**

INCLUDED: ABS, traction control, ESC, downhill brake, hill start assist, dual-zone climate, 8" nav, Android Auto, Harman Kardon premium audio w/ Clari-Fi, UVO SiriusXM, USB/aux, leather, heated/vented front seats, keyless entry/start, heated wheel, paddle shifters, 4.2" color TFT LCD meter cluster, rear camera, blind spot and rear cross traffic alert, lane change assist, lane departure warning, front/rear park assist, autonomous emergency braking, HID auto headlights, dynamic bending lights, high beam assist, LED DRLs, LED fog and taillights, power-fold heated mirrors w/LED signals, panoramic sunroof, smart "hands free" power liftgate*incl*

DESTINATION CHARGE 895

TOTAL **\$33,395**

2017 KIA SPORTAGE FULL LINEUP

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|-----------------------|--------------|--------------------------|
| LX (2.4L) |FWD/AWD | \$22,990 / 24,490 |
| EX (2.4L) |FWD/AWD | \$25,500 / 27,000 |
| SX Turbo (2.0L T-GDI) |FWD/AWD | \$32,500 / 34,000 |

