

## Value & fun BY JOE SAGE

Over the past year and a half or so, Hyundai has grown its crossover/SUV lineup to five, adding at both ends of the size scale. At the big end, the three-row Palisade arrived this summer, while last year brought the sporty little Kona. In between remain Tucson, Santa Fe and Santa Fe XL.

Five Kona models have a 147-hp 2.0L engine in lower trim levels or a 175-hp 1.6L turbo in upper trims. Prices range from just \$19,990 to \$27,500 for core trims for 2019 (with a one-off \$30,550 Iron Man Edition also in the mix). Front-wheel drive is standard on all, with AWD just \$1400 on any.

Closely spaced prices can satisfy any budget, with inclusions plentiful from bottom to top. Kona product planners get a solid "A" for this staircase. (This continues brandwide, in fact, as even the big up-to-eight-seat Palisade starts at just \$31,550.)

We drove multiple trims of Kona at its launch, held appropriately on the Big Island of Hawaii—in sunshine and rain, from sea level to volcanic high

altitude. We then had a top-trim 1.6T Ultimate AWD for a week back home in Arizona, which we took on a healthy Cottonwood-Sedona loop. We've driven Kona at several awards comparos nationally, where it has won its category repeatedly. Here we have a more modest trim back home in Arizona.

This Kona SEL front-driver—just second up in the lineup, at \$21,800 base—brings you 17-inch alloys, leather wheel, blind-spot and collision warning, lane keep, heated front seats, keyless entry/start and more. A Tech Package added to ours at just \$1600 (see sidebar) is also a remarkable value.

Kona looks great in its wilder island-inspired colors—Surf Blue, Sunset Orange, Lime Twist and such—but this example in Chalk White shows off its curves and its black trim bits handsomely (all the moreso as SEL has less chrome, which some may even prefer, than upper trims).

It's a neat, tidy package, stylish, distinctive yet immediately brand-recognizable. Another "A."

We picked up two more adults at the airport, with luggage (they had hours to kill between inter-

national flights). Even with all seats up, there's almost 20 cubic feet for cargo (45.8 with rear seats down), and their five sizable pieces fit easily. The taller of the two gallantly got in the back, where legroom, at 34.6 inches, is in fact only an inch less than in the Sonata, Hyundai's biggest sedan. And we headed out on a Beeline Highway and Saguaro Lake day trip. That's a 700-to-800-pound payload, plus altitude gains, on that 147-hp engine—and it did great. The manumatic can be useful in town when the light turns green, but in motion, engine size made little difference. Our backseat rider was aware of the rear suspension on one rough stretch—FWD models have coupled torsion beam rear suspension, while AWD versions have multi-link (for even more value in the \$1400 AWD uptick).

Kona has been an instant hit and is a carryover model for 2020 (Iron Man is out, and a midrange SEL Plus is added). Prices increase by just \$110 to \$250, and with new treats added—available Sunset Orange with Ultra

Black interior in top trims; smart cruise control on Ultimate trim; 4.2-inch display, wireless charging, HomeLink auto-dim mirror, and leather wheel/shifter on a wider range of trims; a battery warmer system on top trims; new touchscreen navigation on SEL; and some new paint colors.

Smaller than the traditionally "subcompact" Tucson, Kona is called simply "small." As this increasing overlaps, you might skip over size naming conventions and just go try them on for size. You very well may find this smallest one is plenty big enough. ■

### SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	.....2.0L DOHC D-CVET multi-point FI 4-cyl
HP/TORQUE	.....147 hp / 132 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	.....6-spd auto w/OD lock-up torque converter, electronic shift lock system, manual mode, torque-vectoring via braking
DRIVETRAIN	.....FWD
SUSPENSION	.....F: MacPherson strut w coils, gas shocks, advanced valving, stblzr bar; R: coupled torsion beam axle (FWD only), gas shocks, advanced valving, stblzr bar;
STEERING	.....motor driven rack & pinion
BRAKES	.....F: 305mm vented disc; R: 284mm solid disc
WHEELS / TIRES	.....17x7.0J alloy / 215/55R17
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	.....164.0 / 102.4 in
TURNING CIRCLE	.....34.8 ft
GROUND CLEARANCE	.....6.7 in
HEADROOM (F/R)	.....(w sunroof) 38.0 / 37.8 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	.....41.5 / 34.6 in
CARGO CAPACITY	.....19.2 / 45.8 cu.ft
WEIGHT	.....2890-3065 lb
FUEL CAPACITY	.....13.2 gal
MPG	.....27/33/30 (city/hwy/comb)

**SEL INCLUDES:** keyless entry/start, heated front seats, rear privacy glass, leather-wrapped steering wheel, 17-inch alloy wheels, blind-spot collision warning.

BASE PRICE	.....\$21,800
TECH PKG:	power tilt-slide sunroof, 6-way power driver seat w power lumbar, fog lights, infinity premium audio, BlueLink 3 years, shark-fin antenna
CARPETED FLOOR MATS	.....125
DESTINATION CHARGE	.....1045
TOTAL	.....\$24,570



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