

ADD-ONS ADD UP NICELY

BY JOE SAGE

The Kia X-Line treatment adds aggressive sportiness (or in their words, visual and performance excitement) to various models. We had previously spent a week with the urban-oriented 2020 Kia Soul X-Line in spring of 2019. This model receives 18-inch wheels, body cladding and overfenders, foglights, X-Line badging and other details.

The Kia Sorento X-Line is built atop the turbo-charged SX Prestige top trim of this three-row SUV, already bearing 20-inch wheels, a 12.3-inch digital cluster, high-end perforated/embossed leather, 12-speaker audio and other upgrades. To this, they add a rugged bumper with molded-in dark Hyper Silver skid plates, dark Hyper Silver mesh grille, matte black and chrome wheel arches and lower door trim, a matte and gloss black bridge-type roof rack atop a panoramic roof, 10-way adjustable power passenger seat with 2-way lumbar support, and notably 1.3 inches of additional ground clearance atop 20-inch alloy wheels, with greater approach, departure and breakover angles, while making all-wheel drive and snow mode standard. Other specifications and build details are the same as SX

Prestige (or in most cases the full Sorento lineup), including 2000-lb tow capacity or 3500-lb with an optional towing package.

Two front-drive-only hybrid models aside, Kia Sorento is available across five trim levels as a front-driver or with all-wheel drive. AWD will add \$1800 to any, with one deviation: the top-of-the-line SX Prestige as a front-driver becomes an SX Prestige X-Line as its AWD parallel (the model we are driving here) and is priced \$2000 higher, equating to all those X-Line add-ons increasing the price by just \$200 on top of the AWD difference. As long as you're shopping at the top end of the lineup, this is unquestionably a phenomenal value.

Sorento itself is new for 2021, its fourth generation (third as a unibody). Originally due to be revealed at the Geneva Motor Show, which was cancelled in the early stages of pandemic lockdowns, it became one of the first vehicles adapted to an online reveal. Our first in-person exposure was with the EX Hybrid, featured in our prior issue.

Beyond a bold implementation of the brand's latest styling cues, the three upper trims, including

our X-Line, feature a new engine—a 281-hp 2.5L turbo with 311 lb-ft of torque, mated to a segment-exclusive 8-speed wet clutch dual-clutch transmission (DCT), promising equally responsive shifts in town or on a challenging mountain highway.

We gave that last claim a solid run for its money. With the possibility of driving this to Texas (see our next issue), we had lined up the Sorento X-Line for two full weeks, double the usual. We picked it up in the southeast Valley, heading back toward our offices via urban I-10. Here, we hit a significantly rough patch almost right away and noted that both ride comfort and solid road feel were intact, with just the right combination of firmness and give. (At this point, although we also had air tickets, a 2500-mile round-trip Texas drive gained great appeal.) We ultimately hit hundreds of miles of freeways, city grid and open roads right here at home, generally in sport mode as a matter of course, noting the shift pattern was perfectly matched through a wide variety of conditions—tight freeway maneuvers, ramp acceleration, pause-and-go corner turns, green lights from a dead stop on hills and much more. Most automatic shifts let us down in one of these, but we were consistently impressed. Kudos to Kia also for a conventional PRND shift lever.

If you have weekend adventure in your bones, the X-Line's style and stance are bound to tickle your impulses. Our sample's beautiful Aruba Green paint—kind of a deep Army green meets show car metallic—seems to just beg for some time in the woods. Despite its lifted stance, this is no intense off-roader, especially with its 20-inch wheels, but with advanced all-wheel drive, it's more than capable on gravel roads to your favorite camping spot.

We took it on just such a drive, one direction with four-wheel lock off, one with it engaged. We scrambled up a good rough climb with its all-wheel drive in automatic, where we were aware of its grip-seeking efforts, though it always succeeded. (If this is your lifestyle, you may want more aggressive treads.) Between ascent and descent, we had to do a tight turnaround with zero forgiveness in every cliff-hanging direction. This was a familiar location for us, but the Sorento's top, front and rear camera views let us perform it as probably a five-point turn instead of a nine. Nice. On the return, with four-wheel drive locked in, the system created an even more sure-footed beast.

Though we're tall, the Sorento is right-sized and a tidy handler around town, too, achieving divided boulevard U-turns inner-lane-to-inner-lane.

Lower trims seat seven, while upper trims seat six, with captain's chairs for row two. Third row



access is particularly welcoming. The SX Prestige X-Line's top tier leather interior is rich but refreshing, clean and attractive, all the moreso with this sample's stunning Rust interior package, one of the few add-ons, just \$200 very well spent.

For more passenger and cargo space, or for towing up to 5000 lb, Kia offers the Telluride (also in this issue), with familiar tradeoffs in handling and parking, weight, fuel mileage, and purchase cost.

We had endlessly heard in advance how much we should like the Kia Telluride, which has won a range of awards and accolades as a newcomer. As Kia Sorento has been around for twenty years (and consistently the top or one of their top sellers), we hadn't been bombarded by people telling us how much we were expected to like the Kia Sorento SX Prestige X-Line. But we did like it. A lot. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

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|--------------------------------|--|
| ASSEMBLY |KMMG, West Point, Georgia |
| ENGINE / TRANSMISSION BUILD | ...US / S.Korea |
| ENGINE |2.5T turbo 16v GDI+MPI 4-cylinder |
| COMBUSTION RATIO |10.5:1 |
| HP/TORQUE |281 hp / 311 lb-ft |
| DRIVETRAIN |AWD |
| TRANSMISSION |8-spd automatic |
| ZERO-TO-60 / TOP SPEED |7.6 sec / 131 mph |
| BRAKE PERFORMANCE (60-TO-ZERO) |132 ft |
| SUSPENSION |F: MacPherson strut; R: multi-link |
| STEERING |column-mtd motor-driven pwr |
| BRAKES |F: 12.8 vented; R: 12.0 vented |
| WHEELS / TIRES |8.5Jx20 / 255/45R20 |
| LENGTH / WHEELBASE |189.0 / 110.8 in |
| TURNING CIRCLE |37.9 ft |
| GROUND CLEARANCE |8.2 in |
| APPRCH/DEPART/BRKOVER |18.4 / 23.3 / 18.6° |
| ROWS / SEATS |three rows / 2/2/2 |
| HEADROOM (F/2/3) |40.3 / 39.1 / 36.8 in |
| LEGROOM (F/2/3) |41.4 / 41.7 / 29.6 in |
| CARGO CAPACITY |12.6 / 38.5-45.0 / 75.5 cu.ft |
| WEIGHT |3931-4120 lb |
| TOW CAPACITY |2000 lb (with pkg, not on ours) 3500 lb |
| FUEL CAPACITY |17.7 gal |
| MPG |21/28/24 (city/hwy/comb) |

2021 KIA SORENTO LINEUP

| | | | |
|-------------|--------------------|----------|---------------|
| 2.5 | LX |fwd |\$29,390 |
| | |AWD |31,190 |
| S | |fwd |31,890 |
| | |AWD |33,690 |
| 1.6T Hybrid | S |fwd |\$33,590 |
| | EX |fwd |36,590 |
| 2.5 Turbo | EX |fwd |\$34,990 |
| | |AWD |36,790 |
| | SX |fwd |37,990 |
| | |AWD |39,790 |
| | SX Prestige |fwd |40,590 |
| | SX Prestige X-Line |AWD |42,590 |

BASE PRICE

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|---|---|---------------|
| X-LINE AWD INCLUDES: | 20" matte finished alloy wheels, X-Line front & rear fascias, matte trim accents, X-Line roof rails, leather seat trim, heated/vented front seats, heated steering wheel, aluminum sport pedals, auto-dim rearview mirror, Bose premium audio, surround view monitor, blind-spot monitor, 12.3" digital instrument cluster, forward/reverse parking distance warning, reverse parking collision avoidance assist.....incl |nc |
| PAINT: ARUBA GREEN | |200 |
| X-LINE RUST (COLOR) INTERIOR PKG | |210 |
| CARPETED FLOOR MATS | |115 |
| CARPETED CARGO MAT w/seat back protection | |1170 |
| DESTINATION CHARGE | |\$44,285 |
| TOTAL | |\$44,285 |

