

Kia K4 replaces Forte

POISED TO SELL WELL BY JOE SAGE

Going alphanumeric with its names (like so many others, and in line with its EVs), Kia replaced the midsize Optima with the K5 for 2021 (its global name already), now following suit as an all-new K4 replaces the compact Forte.

While the K5 was quickly recognizable as Optima's successor, K4 carries less of the look of the Forte, more the look of the K5. It also bears Kia's latest styling language. With a hint of Tiger Nose lingering, the new look, called "Opposites United," uses a combination of horizontal and vertical elements, easily seen in its headlights and taillights. The new K4 appears long and lean, partly thanks

to its almost coupe-like roof line.

We prefer to think of drive modes as a perk and not a necessity, but power could feel a bit tapped in normal, in our typically aggressive traffic. We quickly made a habit of sticking with sport mode, finding it satisfying through all our conditions in town—accelerating from lights, grabbing our spot in the curves, on straightaways and over a few hills. Parking lot speed bumps could be easy or could be particularly harsh, in either mode.

We liked the K4 quite well, overall—with solid, easy performance and clear value—while also noting its generous interior size for a compact (al-

though we did hit our head upon egress).

We noted more feature and interface critiques than average, too many to dive into here, but none of them deal-killers in this era.

The biggest surprise, however, ruled our experience. Legroom is above average, and the foot well is not small, but after seeming to have no brakes at our first stoop, we located an obstacle above the pedals that caught the toe of our shoe repeatedly (see callout). This made us theoretically compare the K4 with the K5 (and with the outgoing Forte), so we did some real digging. In a nutshell:

- The 2024 Kia Forte was priced about \$1,000-2,500 lower for comparable trims, and \$3,000 or so less when comparing higher-horsepower turbos (with various apples and oranges, including Forte

offering a manual transmission option on the GT). Horsepower numbers were similar to the new K4.

- The K5's standard powertrain bests the K4, at 190 hp vs 147, the turbo ditto, at 290 hp vs 190. You can spend into the mid-\$30s on a top K5, as you'd expect, but you can also get into a 191-hp base K5 at \$27,190, more than a top trim 147-hp non-turbo K4, but less than a top-trim-top-power 190-hp K4 turbo. This is intriguing.

- The K4 falls between Forte and K5 in wheelbase and length. Legroom is generously in the 40s up front, and K4 has the most rear legroom of any.

Comparing the K4 and the K5 is inevitable. The price walk on either is tight and favorable, and specifications could lead to either. If foot size is the decider, though, that could be an absolute. Then again, the K5 may have the same bracket in its footwell—we haven't had an opportunity to check. In any and all, you will find value. ■



NOTES FROM BIGFOOT

We have big feet, men's size 13. In case this is your problem, too, it needs a mention. Alarmed to have no brakes at our first corner, we found our toe was hitting an awkwardly exposed bracket above the pedals. We did seat adjustments and tried to pull our heel back and think ahead before stops, but that's a luxury when braking is needed. We have not encountered this specific snag in other Korean vehicles, but dug into it, and average foot sizes are indeed notably larger in the US than in Korea. If you have big feet, wear your normal shoes on your test drive, and give it all a careful try. •



SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY.....Pesqueria, Nuevo León, Mexico
ENGINE/TRANS BUILDUSA / Mexico
PARTS CONTENT...S Korea 45% / Mexico 35%
/ US/Canada 20%

ENGINE2.0L DOHC D-CVVT 16v HLA 4-cyl,
multi-port inj, alum/alum

HP/TORQUE147 hp / 132 lb-ft

TOP SPEED124 mph

TRANSMISSIONtorque conv 8-spd auto

DRIVETRAINFWD

SUSPENSION.....F: MacPherson strut;

R: multi-link; hydraulic twin-tube gas shock

STEERINGcol-mtd motor-driven pwr

BRAKESF: 15.0 vented; R: 15.0 solid

WHEELS/TIRES8.0J x18 alloy / 235/40R18

LENGTH / WHEELBASE185.4 / 107.1 in

GROUND CLEARANCEna

APPROACH/DEPART14.2 / 18.7°

TURNING CIRCLE35.16 ft

HEADROOM (F/R).....39.0 / 37.3 in

LEGROOM (F/R).....42.3 / 38.0 in

CARGO CAPACITY14.6 cu.ft

WEIGHT3080-3161 lb

FUEL / CAPACITY.....92 oct prem unl / 12.4 gal

MPG29/39/33 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE\$25,190

GT-LINE INCLUDES: 18-in alloy wheels, sport-

tuned multi-link rear susp, GT-Line styling w

gloss black exterior accents, outside mirror

LED turn signal indicators, GT-Line sport

steering wheel w paddle shifters, 12.3-in

touchscreen w nav, cloth & SynTex seats

incl, power driver's seat w power lumbar,

heated front seats, Kia AI Assistant (req Kia

Connect), highway driving assist, nav smart

cruise control w stop & go, rear center arm-

rest w cupholders.....incl

GT-LINE PREMIUM PKG: Harman Kardon premi-

um audio, all-SynTex seats, memory driver's

seat & outside mirrors, vented front seats

.....1100

GT-LINE SUNROOF PKG: pwr sunrf w shade ..900

DESTINATION CHARGE.....1155

TOTAL\$28,345

2025 KIA K4 LINEUP

2.0L MPI - 147 HP / 132 LB-FT - IVTFWD

LX\$21,990

LXS22,990

EX23,990

GT-Line▼ 25,190

1.6 Turbo GDI - 190hp / 195 lb-ft - 8 A/TFWD

GT-Line Turbo\$28,090