

Road beat: Kia Sedona redefines minivan



There is nothing mini about the Kia Sedona. Photos/Larry Weitzman

By Larry Weitzman

Thirty years ago they were all the rage. Almost every manufacturer made them. The field is now reduced to the Japanese manufacturers, Chrysler and one Korean brand, Kia. VW had one, but it was just a version of the Chrysler Town and Country. Ford and GM are out of the minivan business.

Mini-vans are a practical vehicle. Hardly mini, they occupy the footprint of a full size SUV. But they have a huge interior volume, capable of hauling eight people in comfort or nearly 150 cubic feet of cargo behind first row seating. This new 2016 Kia, now in its second year of production, may be the best of the best.

Size-wise, Kia carries dimensions that are fairly standard for a minivan: wheelbase 121 inches, width 78 inches, length 201 inches and height 69 inches. Track (and handling) benefit as it has 68 inches between the center line of the front wheels and the rear measures 69 inches. That's enough data for now.

Not much you can do with a two box vehicle (one box in front with the engine pulling a bigger rear box of people), but Kia has done a great job in its subtle lines and shapes to create an interesting look, like Raymond Loewy did with the Greyhound Scenicruiser bus. Kia uniqueness is created in its third side window design and how it tapers into a smaller shape creating a natural sleekness. It is without question, the best looking of all minivans.

Under the first box mounted transversely or sideways, is one of the best V-6 engines in motoring, the Kia 3.3L, direct injected, high compression (11.5:1), 24 valve, DOHC V-6 knocking down 276 hp at 6,000 rpm and 248 lb.-ft. of torque at 5,200 rpm meaning the engine is also producing about 248 hp at that same 5,20 rpm. If you think this is weak, this same engine used in the Kia Cadenza produces 293 hp when spun to a higher rpm. This 3.3L unit may be half a liter shy of the competition, but its performance is miles ahead.



Specifications

Price \$26,400 to about \$45,000

Engine

3.3L 24 valve, directed injected, DOHC V-6 276 hp @ 6,000 rpm; 248 lb.-ft. of torque @ 5,200 rpm

Transmission

Six-speed torque converter

Configuration

Transverse front mounted engine/front wheel drive

Dimensions

Wheelbase 120.5 inch

Length 201.4 inches

Width 78.1 inches

Height (with roof rails) 69.1 inches

Ground clearance 6.7 inches

Trach (f/r) 68.3/68.6 inches

Weight 4,656 pounds

GVWR 6,085 pounds

Tow capacity 3,500 pounds

Fuel capacity 21.1 gallons

Turning circle 36.8 feet

Steering lock to lock 3.16 turns

Wheels 19X6.5 inch alloys

Tires 235/55X19 inches

Performance

0-60 mph 7.37 seconds

50-70 mph 4.06 seconds

50-70 mph up a grade 6.47 seconds

Top speed Well into triple digits (but not with me in it)

Fuel economy EPA rated at 17/22/19 mpg city/highway/combined.

Expect 21 mpg in rural county driving and 29 mpg at legal speeds on the highway.

Performance matches the high output engine which sends power to the front wheels via a six speed torque converter tranny. Zero to 60 mph terminates in just 7.37 seconds while a 50-70 mph simulates pass lasts only 4.06 seconds and the same run up a 6-7 percent grade on slows that time to 6.47 seconds making this a high performance automobile and outstanding for an almost 4,700-pound minivan. One more point with respect to utility. This Sedona has a GVWR of 6,085 pounds meaning it has a whopping 1,400 plus pound payload capacity. Plus it's rated to tow 3,500 pounds.

On the other side of the coin, the Sedona is rated by the EPA at 17/19/22 mpg. However, it did much better for the Road Beat averaging 29 mpg at 70 mph on the highway with the cruise control set at 70 mph. Overall the Kia averaged 21 mpg. Another thoughtful item with the Sedona is the large 21-gallon fuel tank. Think of the long legged road trips you could do.

Now for the really good stuff. The Sedona is one of the smoothest and quietest vehicles I have driven, and certainly the smoothest and quietest minivan on the market. Suspension is state of the art Macpherson struts up front and a multi-link system in the rear with coils in all four corners. Steering is a reasonably quick electronic power rack with 3.16 turns lock to lock. Wheels are a bit narrow at 6.5X19 inch alloys shod with wide 235/55X19 inch tires. While handling is predictable it tends to run a little wide in tighter corners which means if you are going to make like Lewis Hamilton at Monaco, pay attention. Turning circle is a tight 36.6 feet.

Braking is strong from four wheel discs with the larger front units being ventilated. Of course ABS and the alphabet soup of other acronyms of electronic safety devices are also standard. The brakes have excellent feel and power stopping the Sedona

in 43 feet from 40 mph. Safety is second to none with a plethora of airbags and more.

Inside is a sublime, comfortable interior with the options of seven or eight seats. The front chairs are exceedingly comfortable with the option of two three place benches in the second or third row or captain chairs and a three place bench, your choice.

The instrument panel is stylish and complete. Tach and speedo are standard as is an easy to use trip computer. The entertainment system doesn't require a semester at your local city college. Ditto for the A/C. Sedona is well thought out and to the Road Beat it is number one on the minivan list.

Cementing that choice is pricing. A base Sedona L starts at \$26,400. Now there is a lot of vehicle for the money. My top of the line, fully loaded Sedona SX Limited stickers for \$39,900, plus \$895 for the boat from Korea. It had two options, the Technology Package (\$2,800) and the Rear Seat Entertainment Package (\$1,095) bringing the bottom line to \$44,690. Considering the price of vehicles these days, the Sedona is a superb value. And remember it comes with a standard 10-year/100,000 mile warranty.

Larry Weitzman has been into cars since he was 5 years old. At 8 he could recite from memory the hp of every car made in the U.S. He has put in thousands of laps on racetracks all over the Western United States.