

Road Beat: 2017 Kia Cadenza, more luxury



The Kia Cadenza's 2017 model is worth taking a spin.
Photos/Larry Weitzman

By Larry Weitzman

It has been more than 2½ years since I last tested the Kia Cadenza and for 2017 it becomes a new generation. While it may look only refreshed, the overhaul was far more extensive as it is marginally longer (0.2 inches), with a half inch longer wheelbase, almost an inch wider and is slightly lower.

The entire body structure has been strengthened (more than 35 percent). While it strongly resembles the prior generation, several changes were made to improve its overall appearance, including one change that was suggested by my last Road Beat. Even the co-efficient of drag was reduced from 0.29 to 0.28.

Cadenza is a super mid-size car (196L x 74W x 58H inches) with large car interior dimensions with almost 124 cubic feet of cabin and trunk volume. The body is made more beautiful by a change (suggested by the Road Beat) in the rear quarter window. Before it wasn't part of the overall window line but now the lower window line continues in one smooth slightly upward motion to a Hofmeister type kink that intersects the beautiful, continuously downward curving upper window line making the entire cabin look like an expansive coupe. Well done Kia. You can be sure that Kia's CEO who is also Kia's chief design officer, Peter Schreyer, had a huge hand in this change. Also, changed is the upper character line that extends with purpose from the Z shape headlight signatures to the "piano key" styled tail lights. The Kia signature grille comes in two styles with the top of the line getting the "Intaglio" design of vertical faceted blades.

This "tiger nose" grille also is concaved and the body has a tauter look transforming the Cadenza from what was slightly milk-toast to more of an aggressive cat. It has become a truly beautiful, elegant car. This new designed received a continuous line of compliments from many people, even from those driving competing brands. Cadenza has become a glamorous, upscale looker that will impress even non-car aficionados.

Things have changed in the power train department. While the engine is the same Road Beat favorite, 3.3LD0HC, 16 Valve, Direct Injected V-6 that knocks down 290 hp at 6,400 rpm and 253 pounds of twist at 5,200 rpm, those values are actually down by about one percent from the prior rating of the engine. This 3.3L mill happens to be one of the best V-6s in production, and considering its output, smoothness and efficiency, it is perhaps the best V-6 in production.

Performance has actually improved, probably due to the new super slick eight speed auto cog swapper replacing the prior generation's six-speeder driving the front wheels. Shifts feel

quicker and more positive, almost like an automated dual clutch unit. Needless to say, 0-60 mph times are down four tenths of a second to 5.94 seconds and a level 50-70 mph pass is down to 3.15 seconds. That same run up a steep grade required 4.71 seconds a slight increase of about three tenths of a second. The numbers from the prior test were 6.34, 3.20 and 4.42 seconds respectively. The new Cadenza is a very quick vehicle. Any times under six seconds to 60 mph is world class.



Specifications

Price (with destination)
\$32,890 to about \$45,290

Engine

3.3L DOHC, 24 valve V-6 290
hp @ 6,400 rpm
253 ft.-lbs. of torque @
5,200 rpm

Transmission

8 speed torque converter
automatic with paddle
shifters

Configuration

Transversely mounted front
engine/front wheel drive

Dimensions

Wheelbase 112.4 inches
Length 195.7 inches
Width 73.6 inches

Height 57.9 inches
Track (f/r) 63.1/63.4 inches
Weight (18"/19" wheels)
3,633/3,799 pounds
Ground clearance 5.4 inches
Fuel Capacity 18.5 gallons
Cabin interior volume 107.8
cubic feet
Trunk volume 16.0 cubic feet
Turning circle 37.2 feet
Steering lock to lock 2.71
turns
Wheels (std/opt)
18X7.5/19X8.0 inch alloys
Tires (std/opt)
245/45X18/245/40X19 inch
radials

Performance

0-60 mph 5.94 seconds
50-70 mph 3.15 seconds
50-70 mph uphill 4.71
seconds
Top speed Way beyond sanity
Fuel economy EPA rated at
20/28/23 mpg
city/highway/combined.
Expect 34 mpg in highway
driving at legal speeds and
25-26 mpg overall in
suburban/rural driving.

Fuel economy is also improved marginally. EPA now rates the Cadenza at 20/28/23 mpg city/highway/combined. As usual, my mpg numbers were much higher with a two way 70 mph run on a level highway returning 34.1 mpg, an improvement of one mpg over my last test helped in part to a slightly reduced cruising rpm from the new tranny. In suburban driving with

mostly moderate but with some heavy traffic it averaged 25.2 mpg and overall in 438 miles of driving with almost no time on the open road or the freeway it returned 26.8 mpg. In a 200 mile, round trip from Placerville to Carson City which included almost no freeway, some heavy traffic, climbing over the Sierra twice and 60 percent on windy, two-lane Highway 50, the Cadenza averaged 32.5 mpg. Amazing performance coupled with surprisingly good fuel economy. Fuel capacity remains a large 18.5 gallons making a real highway range of over 600 miles possible, for the Cadenza that is.

Handling is improved because of a slight widening of track of about half an inch to over 63 inches, quicker steering of just 2.71 turns lock to lock and its stiffer body structure. Suspension remains a state of the art four-wheel independent system with wide 245/40 rubber mounted on 19x8 inch alloys. Cadenza goes around corners with good roll control, tracking perfectly where you point it with massive cornering power. There is some understeer, but its mild and the electric power rack has surprisingly good feel and is nicely weighted. Overall Cadenza handles very well with crisp turn-in. It is fun to drive aggressively and it will not disappoint those looking for a real sporty sedan. You have heard of Easy Rider, well this Cadenza is an easy driver.

Ride quality hasn't diminished. Its supple nature absorbs bumps beautifully, while being so well controlled that there is no float and Cadenza is bank vault quiet. It is a smooth mover with the engine spinning just 1,950 rpm at 70 mph, slightly slower than the prior generation. See above.

Braking is strong with large four-wheel discs with all the acronyms and the SX Limited top of the line Cadenza has just about every safety feature you can think down to the surround view monitor. Headlights are very good in low beam, but the high beams could be stronger.

Another Improvement from the prior generation is the interior.

Seating is even more comfortable. Still with super soft Nappa leather, Kia has done a quilt job on the seats giving it a sportier look while adding to their bolstering comfort level. Many high-end sports car like those from Italy use a quilting style in the leather. On the Kia, the pattern is smaller, but it seems to add to the softness of the seats. They do enhance the Kia experience. Already extremely spacious, the sublime rear seating is improved with a bit of additional, already enormous legroom from the longer wheelbase. The trunk is huge at 16 cubic feet.

Instrumentation is complete with a large speedo and tach separated by an information center with three fuel computers, perfect for guys like me. It is well done and easy to use. Materials for the dash and doors are mostly soft touch and exude quality. The center stack is easy to use for both the climate and sound system and it is topped by a huge 8-inch color screen for Nav, rear and surround cameras and the sound system.

So, what is the damage? Price of admission for this absolutely loaded Cadenza SXL is \$44,390 plus \$900 for the boat from Ulsan, Korea. But the base premium model stickers for just \$31,990 and that's with leather seating. Quite the deal. For \$3,000 you can add the premium luxury package which gives you things you would want like NAV with the 8-inch screen. So, a nicely equipped unit is more like \$35 large, but that is a bargain when compared to slightly smaller mid-size cars with about the same level of equipment, but not quite the luxury. The Technology model lists for \$38,990 and has nearly everything including the trick front grille, except things like the quilted seats and I must tell you those seats are nice. Any way you slice it, this Cadenza is like a filet mignon among mid-size near luxury rides. About the only thing for improvement would be an all-wheel drive option. As I said with the newest Hyundais (a sister company to Kia), the Koreans have now out Japanesed the Japanese.

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.