

# Road Beat: Kia Cadenza, near luxury super value



The Kia Cadenza is comfort and performance in one. Photos/Larry Weitzman

**By Larry Weitzman**

A year ago, I sampled the new Kia Cadenza. I proclaimed that the Koreans are now out Japaneseing the Japanese in the car business, building cars of incredible quality and value, with super styling, comfortable interiors, astounding performance and remarkable fuel economy. While this all sounds like a puff piece for the Kia, it's not. The numbers and pictures prove me right and their standard 100,000-mile powertrain warranty demonstrates their commitment to quality.

Nothing has changed with the Cadenza and that's a good thing, as there would be nothing to change. That's how perfect is the

design of the Cadenza, which is a bit of an unknown in the marketplace and that's too bad as it's a beautiful ride. During my testing, anyone who sees it has extremely positive comments, like, "wow, what a beautiful interior" or "that car is really pretty." It pretty well sums up the Cadenza, with its perfect proportions and tasteful, quality appointments. It's a super midsize at 196-inches long, 74-inches wide and 58-inches tall while riding on a long 112-inch wheelbase. Inside is a full size 124 cubic foot interior with a massive 16 cubic foot trunk.

Under the Cadenza's beautiful hood is a beauty of an engine, the 3.3L DOHC V-6 that belts out 290 hp at 6,400 rpm and 253 pounds of twist. It sends the power to the front wheels via an eight-speed cog-swapper. Usually with that kind of thrust you get torque steer and plenty of it, but not here. I don't know how Kia does it, but this Cadenza drives so good, it almost feels like a rear wheel drive car, most people would never know. And the addition of paddle shifters hints of its sportiness.



### **Specifications**

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

### **Engine**

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

**Transmission**

eight 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.

And the performance is world class with a 0-60 mph time of 5.99 seconds. Passing times also reflect world-class performance with a level simulated pass taking 3.02 seconds and the same run up a grade only slowing that time to 4.66 seconds. This Cadenza flies.

Fuel economy is also remarkable. While the EPA numbers are 20/28/23 mpg city/highway/combined, in the 400 miles of varied driving the Cadenza averaged 26.8 mpg with just 20 percent spent on a four-lane highway. At a constant 70 mph, the Cadenza averaged 35.8 mpg and in a 210-mile run over the Sierra to Carson City the average was 30.1 mpg. Part of this is due to the eight-speed tranny keeping engines speeds low, just 1,900 rpm at 70 mph. And with its 18.5-gallon fuel tank (another bonus), 600 miles nonstop is in the ball park, depending on your range.

Suspenders are state of the art four wheel independent and the electric steering rack is a quick 2.7 turns lock to lock. Add to that 19 x 8 inch wheels shod with wide 245/40 series rubber and you have a handler as well as a magic carpet ride. Yes, it is sprung a little less than firm, but in sport mode it is amazing with crisp turn, accurate steering and amazing grip. It does exhibit some body roll but not significant as this Cadenza will exceed most all driver's abilities except for maybe Jeff Gordon at Laguna Seca but then he would effectively demonstrate just how good the Cadenza can perform. Turning circle is good at 37 feet.

Yet it rides like the aforementioned magic carpet with exceeding quiet and comfort. This is a think in a whisper car. It has a super compliant ride and no float.

Braking is strong and every acronym is present down to lane departure warning. LED headlights are very good. A special mention needs to be made about the surround view monitor. It is amazing, at speeds below about 10-15 mph it displays a 360-degree view of what's around your vehicle. In tight parking situations, nothing should ever touch this vehicle and the beautiful finish should always remain perfect.

Inside is another area where the Cadenza shines. The Nappa leather interior is not only butter soft, but spectacular. The quilted bolsters are Ferrari like and the comfort would make me want to have this seat as my office chair. And while they are, of course, heated and cooled, the leather is perforated as well, for added style and comfort, as if they weren't comfortable enough. It's one of the inviting interiors of any car. Rear seating is also spectacular. Leg room would fit a giraffe, never mind the front line of the June Taylor dancers.

Instrumentation is also excellent with a tasteful binnacle with all the right gauges and a center info display that has three trip meters, a nice feature for a techno and data junkie like me. It also has a beautiful center stack with enough buttons and knobs without being cluttered and make controlling all its HVAC and sound system functions easy. And what a sound system it is. If you can't get to Carnegie Hall, just sit in this Cadenza. And I guarantee the seating will be much more comfortable.

So where does that leave us. Here's the amazing deal as Cadenza's start at just over \$32,000 and they are beautifully equipped including leather in the base car. If you are thinking any upgraded midsize sedan, you have to look at Cadenza. The base model will blow you away. But my super luxu SXL model stickers for \$44,390 plus \$900 for the luxury suite on the boat from Hwaseong, Korea. This is a vehicle that is not advertised heavily, if at all and should not be overlooked by any midsize car buyer. It is an incredible value.

*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.*