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## 2009 Kia Sportage Review | New Kia Sportage



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### Sleeper Alert: Kia Sportage is really that good.

What the heck is Kia doing coming out with such a peppy, powerful mini-SUV with an MSRP that starts at just over \$16,000?

It's important to take all of the kudos any car receives with a large grain of salt, but it's clear why Consumer Digest named the 2009 Kia Sportage a "Best Buy" for the second year in a row. Although the previous model rightfully received kudos, the 2009 version has an updated exterior -- including a reshaped grille plus new headlights and bumpers -- making it even sportier looking. The same high gloss, premiere exterior finish that won the 2008 Sportage praise shines on.

**The 2009 Kia Sportage is sleek, with a deceptively shapely exterior that belies the roomy interior and a top-of-the-line finish.**

Climb behind the wheel and head out to pick up the kids without fear of verbal "soccer mom" or "soccer dad" epithets flying your way. This is no dreaded "mini van." Sportage is sleek, with a deceptively shapely exterior that belies the roomy interior and a top-of-the-line finish. This beauty is more than skin deep.

Now before we go on, it's important to release your memories of the '90s-era Sportage. Sure it was less than stellar then and auto reviews underscored its faults. Well, this is a new century and along with it a new Sportage. This year's car might share the same name as the '90s version, but not much else.

When you turn the key, the first thing you'll likely notice is that the Sportage drives more like a car than a big truck. No gingerly inching your way into a parking spot with this car. It swings into even relatively tight spots with ease. Plus the design makes vision clear from all directions.

### 2009 Kia Sportage Interior

The inside story is that the 2009 Sportage features a 4WD system that Kia notes can transfer half the engine's power to the rear wheels when needed. During this test drive, those conditions weren't encountered. But Kia handled well -- and steady -- on dirt roads and highways. Its power was smooth and steady with none of the hesitation that is rampant in some of its competitors.

Now here's something adults and kids will all like -- the comfort of the car. The interior is roomy (23.6 cubic feet with the backseat up, 66.6 cubic feet with it down according to Kia) enough to give you plenty of leg and elbow room without such an expanse that you need an arm extension to reach the back seat. That's super important to most parents. Plus, the car is easy to enter unlike some SUVs that have such high steps they make the cars almost impossible for youngsters to enter.

The rear seats split and fold into all kinds of configurations, perfect for hauling passengers and gear. As corny as it sounds, the cup holders are well placed and have that little extra -- plastic stabilizers -- that mean so much when you are traveling with a high-stain alert drink such as grape juice. Other extras that mean a lot: plenty of interior storage spots, large convenient dials that are easy to use even when you're wearing gloves, six standard airbags, traction control and four-wheel antilock disc brakes are standard.

### 2009 Kia Sportage Mileage

Now the downside: The Kia doesn't get great gas mileage. The 2008 ratings were 20-mpg city, 25-mpg highway (2WD) and 17 mpg city, 21-mpg highway (4WD), according to the U.S. Department of Energy. The numbers for the 2009 models aren't in yet but Kia hasn't announced any major modifications that indicate they'll be much higher.

But it's interesting to note that weeks after this test drive, those who'd seen the Kia were asking for more details about it. Yeah, it looks that good. As gas prices continue to dip, the smart money bets that the Kia Sportage's market share will continue to rise.

By: Nancy Dunham, Autotropolis




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