

Efficiency With Ease

Sportage Hybrid Makes Practicality Feel Easy, Cushy and Upscale

By Derek Price

CARGAZING.COM

After a week of commuting, running around town and watching the fuel gauge move with unusual restraint, the appeal became obvious. This compact SUV doesn't try to dazzle you with speed or drama. It wins by being easy to live with.

My tester, a Sportage Hybrid SX-Prestige AWD, came to \$41,985 with floor mats and destination included. That is not inexpensive, but in today's market it feels almost rational considering how much equipment Kia packs inside.

The strongest argument is fuel economy. The Sportage Hybrid seemed genuinely careful with gasoline whether I was crawling through city traffic or cruising at highway speeds. In a week when fuel costs can still feel like a major household bill, this Kia made a noticeable dent in the budget.

It is not especially quick, but it also is not painfully slow. The trick is learning to ask for power a little earlier than you might in a bigger-engine SUV. Press the gas pedal with some intention, and it has enough thrust to merge confidently or pass slower traffic without much anxiety.

The downside is sound. The small turbocharged four-cylinder engine can be



The 2026 Kia Sportage Hybrid combines sharp lighting, clean body sculpting and compact-SUV proportions with a more confident, upscale look.

grating when pushed, with more mechanical buzz than polish. That is not unusual in hybrids built for efficiency first, but it does remind you this is a practical machine rather than a luxury vehicle.

Still, the powertrain fits the Sportage's mission well. Kia says the hybrid system makes 232 horsepower and uses a six-speed automatic transmission, a more traditional setup than the continuously variable transmissions found in some rivals. That helps it feel more normal from the driver's seat.

Ride quality is another defining trait, and it leans heavily toward comfort.

The suspension is soft,

almost cushy, which makes the Sportage relaxing over rough pavement and broken city streets. It absorbs bumps with the kind of easygoing calm that busy families and commuters will appreciate.

The trade-off is that it does not feel especially planted at higher speeds. There is more body motion than in sportier competitors, and enthusiastic drivers will not mistake it for something athletic.

That is fine. The Sportage knows its job, and carving corners is not it.

Inside, the cabin is where Kia makes the price feel justified.

The SX-Prestige trim has

an upscale look with large digital displays, modern controls and a generous list of comfort and driver-assistance features. It does not feel stripped down or bargain focused. It feels like Kia understands shoppers want value, not punishment.

Rear-seat space is excellent. Adults can sit comfortably in back, and the reclining rear seats are a thoughtful touch that makes this SUV feel more road-trip friendly than its compact footprint suggests. Cargo space is useful, too, making it a good fit for families who need flexibility without moving up to a larger, thirstier SUV.

Competitors such as the Honda CR-V Hybrid, Toyota

RAV4 Hybrid and Hyundai Tucson Hybrid all make strong cases. The Kia stands out by feeling especially rich for the money, with a cabin and feature list that make the sticker easier to swallow.

The Sportage Hybrid is not perfect. The engine sound lacks charm, and the soft suspension will not please drivers who want crisp responses.

But as an everyday SUV, it is convincing. It saves fuel, rides comfortably, gives rear passengers real room and surrounds the driver with enough technology to feel current.

For a vehicle priced near the middle of today's new-car market, that's a smart formula.

AT A GLANCE

WHAT WAS TESTED?

2026 Kia Sportage Hybrid SX-Prestige AWD (\$40,390). Options: Floor mats (\$200). Price as tested (including \$1,395 destination charge): \$41,985

BY THE NUMBERS

Wheelbase: 108.5 in.
Length: 184.4 in.
Width: 73.4 in.
Height: 66.3 in.
Engine: 1.6-liter turbocharged four cylinder (177 hp, 195 lb.-ft.)
Transmission: Six-speed automatic
MPG: 35 city, 36 highway

RATINGS

Style: 7
Performance: 5
Price: 8
Handling: 6
Ride: 7
Comfort: 6
Quality: 7
Overall: 7

WHY BUY IT?

The Sportage Hybrid is for buyers who want excellent fuel economy, a roomy upscale cabin and lots of useful technology in a comfortable compact SUV.

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Inside, the Sportage Hybrid offers a roomy cabin with large digital displays, generous rear-seat space and practical comfort features.

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A CLOSER LOOK



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FACTS, FIGURES AND RATINGS

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