

2002 KIA SEDONA LX

Kia enters the minivan market with the Sedona, sporting similar dimensions to those of the Dodge Caravan. Available in two generously equipped models, the Sedona is distinguished by its 3.5L V6 engine, its five-speed automatic transmission and its five-year/100,000-kilometre bumper-to-bumper warranty.

Interior and trunk

Access is easy, except to the last bench where a bit of flexibility is required. The front seats prove to be very comfortable and provide a sufficiently high position—some taller people might even find it a bit too high. The driver's seat, however, has a two-wheel control to adjust the height of the cushion.

The first bench is comfortable, especially because the seatback can be tilted back and the bench slides fore and aft. The bench can also be placed to the right side or left side of the car by employing the use of two muscular arms—or preferably four, because it is heavy. The seatbacks of both benches fold down onto the cushion.

The rear bench is divided into two equal sections, both rather heavy, that can be moved independently of each other. Neither of the two bench seats has room underneath for skis or other long objects.

With the last bench in place and pushed fully back, cargo capacity is somewhat restricted. Obviously, if this bench is moved forward—or removed entirely—cargo capacity is considerably increased.

The benches are quite heavy and manoeuvring to remove them is all the more complicated by the fact that the seatbacks don't lock in place once they are folded down.

Convenience and security

Though the cabin is well finished, there is too much wind noise at highway speeds. The Sedona is teeming with storage spaces: two glove compartments, a receptacle in the dashboard, two map pockets in each front door, net pockets behind the front seatbacks, a locking drawer beneath the front passenger seat, receptacles in the back and some other modestly sized ones scattered throughout. With the gear-change lever located in the dashboard, there is room to move between the front bucket seats.

The heating system is a bit slow but gives off plenty of heat. Unfortunately, the temperature can't be adjusted in the rear heating unit, only the fan speed.

The controls are well-placed, except the one for the rear wiper, which is hidden by the steering wheel and the turn-signal lever. Note that the rear wiper has both a continuous and an intermittent cycle.

From a safety standpoint, the Sedona relies upon two airbags, six head- restraints that lock but aren't high enough for taller people, powerful headlights, good visibility in all directions except out the back due to the last bench's rear head restraints (just fold down the rear seatback to fix the problem), and ABS brakes in the EX model.

Engine and transmission

The 3.5L V6 engine comes from Hyundai's XG 350, and has 195 horsepower and 218 pound-feet of torque. Acceleration and pick-up are energetic enough to make us wonder if the power was underestimated by 10 to 15 horses. Moreover, an engine as powerful and strong as this one is necessary to be able to move—with such ease—a vehicle that outweighs its main competitors by between 360 and 430 kg. By the same token, it is able to pull a load of up to 1,580 kg. This engine meets LEV (Low Emissions Vehicle) standards, which is fortunate since its fuel consumption is the highest of the minivans. The accelerator is a bit hard to modulate, especially upon initial starts.

The well-gearred automatic five-speed transmission generally operates very smoothly. However, downshifts can be slow and harsh in a fast stop. In fifth, the engine runs at barely 2,000 rpm at 100 km/h.

On the road

The suspension provides a beautifully smooth ride laced with just enough firmness to prevent that pitching motion that absorbing some bumps could have. Even with several passengers and some luggage on board, the suspension retains its good points without flagging. For this type of car, the road holding is very decent, with normal lean in enthusiastically negotiated curves. The Sedona's performance gives a sound impression of sturdiness.

Though heavy at low speed, the power steering is stable, precise and fairly quick, on top of having a short turning circle. The brakes prove powerful and fade resistant, but are poorly served by a spongy pedal.

Among the Sedona's standard features we noted coolers for both the transmission and the power steering—very rare. With this feature, both the transmission and the power steering should last a long time, regardless of the type of use.

When examined at the CAA-Quebec Technical Inspection Center, we found that the Sedona is well-built overall. It has a very sturdy structure, which explains its weight, and a generously applied antirust treatment. The pipes for the rear heating system and the gas-tank filler neck could have better protection.

Conclusion

The Sedona comes as a pleasant surprise, backed by an advantageous equipment/price ratio and a generous five-year/100,000-kilometre, bumper-to-bumper

warranty. Though comfortable, pleasant to drive and roomy, this minivan is not without faults, as the fuel consumption and the heavy benches could weigh in the balance for some potential buyers.

HIGHS

Powerful engine
Smooth transmission
Comfort
Handling
Generously equipped
5-year basic warranty

LOWS

Wind noise
Heavy bench seats
Heating a bit slow
Spongy brake pedal
Hard-to-modulate accelerator
High fuel consumption

2002 KIA SEDONA

Engine: 24-valve, 3.5-litre V-6
Torque: 218 lb.-ft. @ 3,500 rpm
Suspension: independent/rigid axle
Length: 493 cm
Height: 173 cm
Weight: 2,136 kg
Towing capacity: 1,587 kg

Horsepower: 195 h.p. @ 5,500 rpm
Transmission: 5-speed automatic
Brakes: disc/drum
Width: 189.5 cm
Wheelbase: 291 cm
Tires: 215/70R15
Air bags: standard front

Fuel consumption:

- Transport Canada rating: city: 15.6 L/100 km (18 mpg); highway: 10.9 L/100 km (26 mpg)
- Test result: 14 L/100 (20 mpg)

Fuel tank capacity: 75 litres

Acceleration: 0-100 km/h: 9.9 seconds 60-100 km/h: 6.3 seconds

Competition: Chevrolet Venture, Dodge Caravan, Mazda MPV, Pontiac Montana, Toyota Sienna

Maintenance (amount may vary from dealer to dealer):

Frequency: 3 months/6,000 km; total to 100,000 km: \$1,478

Warranty:

- Full basic coverage: 5 years/100,000 km
- Powertrain: 5 years/100,000 km
- Surface corrosion: 1 year/20,000 km
- Perforation damage: 5 years/unlimited mileage
- Emissions control system: 5 years/100,000 km (full coverage); 8 years/130,000 km (catalytic converter, electronic control module and onboard diagnostic device)

Factory replacement parts:

Rear bumper: \$660

Brake pads: \$103

Front fender: \$252

Front brake disk: \$103

Muffler: \$322

Average insurance premium (Quebec City, replacement cost endorsement, claim-free insurance record, female driver or male driver 30 to 40 years old): \$834 to \$1,171

Price according to trim line:

LX: \$24,595

EX: \$27,595

Main options:

Luxury package: \$2,000

Price as tested: \$24,595

Freight and preparation: \$945

Dealers: Quebec: 46; Canada: 155

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