

2011 KIA SORENTO



The new generation Sorento has undergone radical change, from a rear-drive body-on-frame sport utility to a front-drive unibody crossover utility. The Sorento is now based on the Hyundai Santa Fe chassis, and it is offered in LX and EX models with all-wheel drive as an option.

Interior and cargo area

Access is easy for all but short people, but you have to watch out for the grime that collects on the wide doorsills. The front seats are comfortable, though for some they are too firm. You feel more like you're sitting on than in the seat, but you eventually get used to it. Harder to deal with is the fact that the seats are high. Tall people would like to be able to lower them a bit to keep their head away from the ceiling. That does nothing for the driving position. Some people find that the head restraints are too close to the head for comfort. Because of the fender well, the passenger can only stretch out their legs by angling them to the left.

Access to the second row is easy. The bench seat is comfortable for two adults. Its seatback is split 60/40 and both sections recline to 13 different angles. When folded the seatback slopes up slightly towards the front. Headroom and legroom are generous. The 40-section folds to provide access to a third-row bench that is suitable only for small children because of the very limited leg and foot room. This seat folds flat into the floor.

In five-seater versions, cargo space with the rear seat up is a relatively spacious 100 cm. Seat down, the cargo area measures 180 cm with the front seats adjusted for tall people. Width measures 102 cm (13 cm less than the Santa Fe). Height is 76 cm with the sunroof (4 cm less than the Santa Fe) and 78 without. In models without a third-row seat there's a practical in-floor storage compartment with a lid. Seven-seater models have less cargo space (26 cm behind the seatback) with the third-row up. The liftgate opens high out of the way.

Convenience and safety

The interior is very well finished in good-quality materials. Sound suppression is effective except for wind noise on occasion. Cabin storage is plentiful, including an impressive centre console.

Instruments and controls are well laid out. At night, all are lighted, directly or indirectly. The climate control system is efficient. In our test vehicle, satellite radio reception was interrupted quite frequently.

Unlike the Santa Fe, the Sorento's roof rails are not flush mounted, which is more practical because objects can be more securely attached.

The windshield is recessed from the roof pillars, allowing snow to collect, especially at their base. The accumulation of snow can strain the wiper motor by preventing the wipers from reaching their full scope. The washer nozzles are placed under the hood and can easily be blocked by snow.

Safety equipment includes dual front, side and curtain airbags; five or seven head restraints, depending on the model, with active restraints in front; stability control; traction control; and four-wheel antilock disc brakes. The head restraints do not adjust high enough for tall people. It is hard to judge distances when backing up, but otherwise, outward visibility is good. The headlights lack range and intensity somewhat, especially in the low-beam position.

The Sorento has not yet undergone U.S. crash testing but we do know that the Santa Fe was awarded five stars out of five for front occupant protection in a frontal impact and for all occupant protection in a side crash. All models of the Santa Fe earned four stars for rollover resistance. The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety gave the Sorento a Good rating, its highest, for roof strength, driver protection in a frontal offset crash, and all-occupant protection in a side crash (for Sorento's built after March 2010) and in a rear crash.

Engine and transmission

The 3.5-litre V6 develops 276 horsepower and 248 pound-feet of torque, providing energetic acceleration in all situations. However, we'd like its gas pedal to be more progressive. The 2.4-litre 4-cylinder (175 hp and 169 lb-ft of torque) will suit people for whom performance is not a priority. However, with a good load and/or in hilly terrain, it is less at ease.

The six-speed automatic transmission functions so smoothly that gearshifts are barely perceptible. Gears are well spaced, and the transmission lets you drive off in second. The Sorento is equipped with a very efficient system that allows the vehicle to descend a sharp incline very slowly.

The all-wheel-drive system distributes torque 95/5 front/rear in routine driving. If the front wheels slip, it can direct up to 50% of torque to the rear wheels. A control also allows the driver to lock distribution at 50/50. Once speed reaches 30 km/h, the system returns to automatic mode. All modes function well.

On the road

The four-wheel independent suspension delivers a very smooth ride on most paved surfaces. Some pavement breaks set off a firm, sometimes stiff reaction especially in versions equipped with 18-inch tires. Road holding is very good for this type of

vehicle. The Sorento handles more like a car than a vehicle destined for serious off-roading, which it is not, yet it drives with a sturdy feel.

Heavy especially at low speed, the power steering is linear, precise and relatively quick. It transmits a bit of road sensation and its turning radius is small. The four-wheel disc brakes are powerful and resist well to fade after several emergency stops at highway speed. Hopefully, they'll be long lasting, because along with the muffler they are expensive, especially compared to similar parts for the Santa Fe.

Inspection

In an inspection at a CAA-Quebec technical inspection centre, we saw that the Sorento's platform is sturdy. Underneath, many of the seams are sealed but rust coating does not extend to the centre. There is an anchor point in front (none in the back) to which a rope can be attached, to better secure a canoe, for instance. The overhead camshafts of both engines are chain driven.

Conclusion

Like the Santa Fe, the new Sorento has much to offer. It is spacious, comfortable, well designed, enjoyable to drive and offered in several versions. Only tall people will find it difficult to really feel comfortable behind the wheel.

PROS: roominess, comfort (first two rows), smooth automatic transmission, fit and finish, handling, lively well-adapted V6, choice of versions

CONS: front seats too high, heavy steering, washers under edge of hood, visibility when backing up, windshield recessed from roof pillars, headlights a bit weak

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Engine: 16-valve, 2.4-litre 4-cylinder; 24-valve, 3.5-litre V6

Horsepower: 175 hp at 6,000 rpm; 276 hp at 6,300 rpm

Torque: 169 lb-ft at 3,750 rpm; 248 lb-ft at 5,000 rpm

Transmission: 6-speed manual; 6-speed automatic

Suspension: fully independent

Brakes: disc/disc

Wheelbase: 270 cm

Length: 467 cm

Width: 188.5 cm (without mirrors)

Height: 175.5 cm (with roof rails and sunroof)

Weight: 1,620 to 1,874 kg

Tires: P235/65R17; P235/60R18

Maximum towing capacity: 1 588 kg

Airbags: dual front, plus two side and two curtain airbags

Fuel consumption with V6 and AWD

Transport Canada rating:

City: 11.1 L/100 km (25 mpg)

Highway: 7.9 L/100 km (35 mpg)

Test result: 12.5 L/100 km (23 mpg)

Test temperature: 3°C to 23°C

CO₂ emissions: 4,636 kg/20,000 km

Fuel tank capacity: 68 litres

Fuel requirement: regular grade

Acceleration with V6 and AWD

0–100 km/h: 7.8 seconds

60–100 km/h: 5.5 seconds

Competition: Chevrolet Equinox, Ford Escape, GMC Terrain, Honda CR-V, Hyundai Santa Fe, Mazda CX-7, Mitsubishi Outlander, Nissan Rogue, Suzuki Grand Vitara, Subaru Forester, Toyota RAV4

Warranty:

- Full basic coverage: 5 years/100,000 km
- Powertrain: 5 years/100,000 km
- Surface corrosion: 3 years/60,000 km
- Perforation damage: 5 years/unlimited km
- Emissions control system: 5 years/100,000 km (full coverage); 8 years/130,000 km (catalytic converter, electronic control module, onboard diagnostic system).

Factory replacement parts:

- Rear bumper: \$864
- Front brake disc: \$272
- Brake pads: \$143
- Muffler: \$845
- Front fender: \$352

Price according to trim level:

- 2.4 LX: \$23,995
- LX V6: \$29,095
- 2.4 EX: \$29,795
- EX V6: \$31,795
- EX V6 Luxury: \$37,995

Main options:

- Automatic transmission package: \$2,600 (2.4 LX)
- AWD: \$1,900
- Third seat: \$1,200 (LX V6, EX V6)

Price as tested: \$31,795

Freight and preparation: \$1,650

Dealers: Quebec: 55 Canada: 166

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