

## 2010 KIA SOUL



The Soul is a four-door subcompact hatchback wagon. Two 4-cylinder engines can power the front wheels, a 1.6-litre and a 2.0-litre. Along with the Soul's unique styling come equally unusual (apart from the base model) trim level designations: 2u, 4u, 4u Retro and 4u Burner. Contrary to appearances, the Soul is not available with four-wheel drive.

### **Interior and cargo area**

Access to both the front and rear is easy. The front seats are comfortable, but there is no lumbar adjustment and the bulge of the integrated lumbar support won't be to everyone's liking. The driving position is good. The wheel wells limit space somewhat for the driver's left leg and for the passenger's right.

The rear bench seat is comfortable but for two adults only. The floor tunnel hump takes up much of the legroom in the middle. Headroom is relatively generous. The 60/40-split seatback folds flat to the floor, leaving a big gap behind the front seats into which a pet could tumble.

Needless to say, with just 63 cm behind the rear seatbacks in the upright position, cargo space is limited. Folding the seatbacks expands it to 145 cm. The cargo area is 73 cm high and 110 cm wide. There is a storage compartment under the cargo floor, which is a bit high, and the hatch opens wide.

### **Convenience and safety features**

Interior finish is very good, whereas the quality of materials is just average. Scratch marks become permanent on some of the plastics; Kia is looking for a solution. Soundproofing should be improved to lower the level of road noise. Total capacity of the several small storage compartments is limited.

Gauges and controls are well displayed. The glove compartment and several controls are not lighted at night. Air conditioning is efficient.

The speakers in the 4u versions come with three mood lighting modes. Fortunately, the speaker lighting can be switched off to eliminate the annoying reflections it produces in the side windows.

***Photo: Kia***

Safety features include dual front, side and curtain airbags; five head restraints, the front ones active; and four-wheel disc brakes. All but the base versions have antilock brakes and stability control. Visibility is good except on a three-quarter-rear angle, because of the wide C-pillars, and to the rear when backing up. Headlight intensity is adequate in the low-beam position but in the high-beam position, there are several dark spots in the lighted zone.

In U.S. government tests, the Soul obtained five stars, out of five, for the protection of front occupants in the event of a front or a side crash. It earned four stars for rear-passenger protection in a side crash, and four stars for rollover resistance. The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety awarded the Soul a Good rating, its highest, for driver protection in an offset frontal impact, for all occupants in a side crash and for all occupants in a rear crash.

### **Engine and transmission**

The 2.0-litre four-cylinder engine develops 142 horsepower and 137 pound-feet of torque, which allows the Soul to deliver quite decent acceleration and pickup. Normal driving is not a problem, but you have to throttle down convincingly to obtain a bit of vigour. The throttle sometimes is not progressive. The ignition system uses a coil and spark plug wires, which is a bit archaic.

The four-speed automatic transmission is well geared and shifts very smoothly. Unfortunately, it doesn't let you drive off in second gear. This transmission is offered only with the 2.0-litre engine.

### **On the road**

All 4u versions are equipped with 18-inch, 45-profile tires and a suspension that's about 10 percent stiffer than the other models (which cannot be equipped with 18-inch tires). The ride is generally firmly comfortable, but on some rough surfaces the reaction can be almost harsh. Road holding is adequate, with normal lean in turns. Vehicle height and ground clearance should be taken into consideration before pushing the vehicle too enthusiastically on winding roads. The Soul drives with a solid feel.

The power steering is heavy, especially at low speed, but otherwise it is stable, precise and quick. It delivers a bit of road feel. The brakes are powerful, with good fade resistance even after a few highway-speed emergency stops.

### **Inspection**

In an inspection at a CAA-Quebec technical inspection centre, we saw that the Soul is built on a sturdy platform that is well protected against corrosion. The fuel filler pipe is exposed, and unprotected, and the plastic sheathing of the fuel and brake lines may collect mud, snow and ice, which is not desirable. Debris can get through the openings under the front bumper and damage the air-conditioner condenser and power steering cooler. The engine's overhead camshafts are chain driven.

## Conclusion

The Soul is a city vehicle that offers unique styling, comfortable front seats, agile handling and a certain degree of functionality. However, you can't help but wonder why the suspension in most of the versions is so firm—especially with the 18-inch, low-profile tires, which deliver a ride that many people won't find enjoyable.

**PROS:** comfortable front seating, agile handling, quick steering, smooth automatic transmission, careful fit and finish, good brakes.

**CONS:** three-quarter-rear visibility, heavy steering, modest engine performance, perfectible headlights, openings under front bumper, sport suspension sometimes harsh.

## 2010 KIA SOUL

**Engine:** 16-valve, 1.6-litre 4-cylinder; 16-valve, 2.0-litre 4-cylinder

**Horsepower:** 122 hp at 6,300 rpm; 142hp at 6,000 rpm

**Torque:** 115 lb-ft at 4,200 rpm; 137 lb-ft at 4,600 rpm

**Transmission:** 5-speed manual; 4-speed automatic

**Suspension:** fully independent

**Brakes:** disc/drum (2.0-litre: disc/disc)

**Wheelbase:** 255 cm

**Length:** 410.5 cm

**Width:** 178.5 cm

**Height:** 161 cm

**Weight:** 1,190 to 1,355 kg

**Tires:** P195/65R15; P205/55R16; P225/45R18

**Maximum towing capacity:** not recommended

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

### **Fuel consumption with 2.0-litre engine and automatic transmission:**

Natural Resources Canada rating:

City: 8.5 L/100 km (33 mpg)

Highway: 6.6 L/100 km (43 mpg)

Test result: 8.5 L/100 km (33 mpg)

Test temperature: 12°C to 27°C

**CO<sub>2</sub> emissions:** 3,670 kg/20,000 km

**Fuel tank capacity:** 48 litres

**Fuel requirement:** regular grade gasoline

### **Acceleration:**

0–100 km/h: 11 seconds

60–100 km/h: 7.8 seconds

**Competition:** Nissan Cube, Nissan Versa hatchback, Toyota Matrix

**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: \$858
- Front brake disc: \$224
- Brake pads: \$125
- Muffler: \$634
- Front fender: \$285

**Price according to trim level:**

- Base: \$15,495
- 2u: \$17,995
- 4u: \$19,995
- 4u Retro: \$20,695
- 4u Burner: \$20,995

**Main options:**

- Air conditioning: \$1,000 (base version)
- Automatic transmission: \$1,200

**Price as tested:** \$22,195

**Freight and preparation:** \$1,650

**Dealers:** Quebec: 53      Canada: 158

© July 2009. All rights reserved, CAA-Quebec