

Names and numbers

New Kia midsize sedan sheds Optima name for global K5

Kia recently launched a new midsize sedan—online, pandemic quarantine style, no drive yet—and while there is much to talk about, first and most obvious is its name. In an era full of alphanumeric model names from many manufacturers, Kia has had many highly recognizable names: Soul, Forte, Telluride, Stinger. And of course Optima, their popular midsize sedan, selling in the top half dozen among over 20 entries.

As is often the case, though, this car has had a different name at home and in much of the rest of the world: Kia K5. You may be familiar with the small-volume Kia K900 full-size luxury sedan. This is the K9 in Korea, but its name was modified for our market. There have long been several other Kia K-number models globally, as well. Well, welcome Kia alphanumerics to our shores. Now that you're oriented, here's the new car.

And new it is. Built on a new platform (N3), it's longer, lower and wider, all of which sounds familiar, but it has specifically allowed all this (and more) to go into the cabin—just check out the legroom statistics at right (as well as trunk size).

The K5 lineup follows Kia's familiar stairsteps, starting with the LX (at just \$400 more than the top Forte compact). The engine and a new 8-speed automatic transmission are the same from LX up

to EX. The line-topping GT moves from a 1.6L turbo to 2.5L turbo, with new highs in power and torque, while also bearing a DCT performance transmission, upgraded steering and suspension, and the largest among tire and wheel specifications that have been upgraded across the full lineup.

Kia introduces all-wheel drive as an option on the top two 1.6T models, at just \$1200 on one, \$1100 on the other, though it's not available on the top-top GT 2.5T. (None offer a manual shift.)

A full range of effectively implemented drive modes enhance your personal experience, with additional Snow mode for the all-wheel-drivers and Sport+ for the GT.

K5 also gives us a first look at new Kia styling, with a grille (still tiger-nosed) that runs full width and even suggests a wraparound.

While midsize sedan sales have dropped industrywide in the past few years, as many buyers moved to compact crossovers, some brands have dropped out of the segment—which Kia has seen as an opportunity. "Give It Everything" is their new mantra, and that's what they've done here.

The new K5 is built at Kia's West Point, Georgia plant, along with the Telluride SUV. LX through EX models began rolling out this summer, with the hot GT following this fall. ■

A name is just a name, or is it? Branding is vitally important, or we wouldn't have names at all. Alphanumerics have worked just fine for many other brands, though not all. "Kia Optima" has rolled off the tongue easily for years. Now get used to "Kia K5." There, that wasn't so hard, was it?

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINES:	
LX, LXS, GT-Line, EX	1.6L turbo-4 GAMMA-II
HP/TORQUE	180 hp / 195 lb-ft
GT 2.5T	2.5L turbo-4 MPI THETA-III
HP/TORQUE	290 hp / 311 lb-ft
DRIVETRAIN	FWD (opt AWD on LXS, GT-Line)
TRANSMISSION	(all models except GT) 8-spd auto
	(GT 2.5T) 8-spd wet dual-clutch trans (DCT)
SUSPENSION	F: MacPherson strut; R: multi-link, gas shocks (F/R: sport-tuned on GT 2.5T);
STEERING	(all but GT) rack & pinion col-mtd power (GT 2.5T) rack & pinion R&P-mtd power
BRAKES	hydraulic, vacuum power-assist (all but GT) F: 12.0 vented; R: 11.2 solid disc (GT 2.5T) F: 13.6 vented; R: 12.8 solid disc
WHEELS/TIRES	(LX, LXS) 6.5x16 / P205/65R16 95H (GT-Line, EX) 7.5x18 / P235/45R18 94V (GT 2.5T) 8.0x19 / P245/40R19 94W
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	193.1 / 112.2 in
TURNING CIRCLE	36.0 ft
GROUND CLEARANCE	5.3 in
HEADROOM (F/R) (no snrf: LX, LXS, GT-Line)	40.2 / 37.8 in (w pano sunroof: GT-Line, EX, GT 2.5T) 38.4 / 37.4 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	46.1 / 35.2 in
CARGO CAPACITY	16.0 cu.ft
WEIGHT	3115-3228 lb (GT tbd)
FUEL (ALL MODELS)	regular unleaded
FUEL CAPACITY	LX 14.8 gal; others 15.8 gal
MPG	(1.6T LX) 29/38/32 (city/hwy/comb) (other 1.6T models FWD) 27/37/31 (city/hwy/comb) (AWD models and GT 2.5T) tbd

LX	\$23,490
LXS	\$24,490
GT-Line	\$25,390
GT-Line AWD	\$26,590
EX	\$27,990
EX AWD	\$29,090
GT 2.5T	\$30,490

