

Family motoring gets the fun factor

Ian Lamming parties in the Kia Carens

IF YOU need a better social life than have children; they know how to party, they know how to have fun.

As for modern day mums and dads, well they are there to pay for it, sort their busy social diaries and attend to the logistics; we know our place.

"Your problem daddy is that you are not funful," my five-year-old informed me en route for another day out of fun and frolics with friends. That's probably because I am too busy making sure he has a good time, I thought but didn't vocalize.

And in this new world of parties and trips away the means of transport becomes even more important.

One small boy, three mates and two mothers suddenly adds up to seven and it would be a shame to go in a cavalcade of cars as this would only lead to strife as it is decided who rides with who.

But with Kia's latest people carrier, the Carens, there's no need to worry. A quick glance its way and it looks like a Cee'd, perhaps a Cee'd SW at a push. So the real surprise is that it is actually a full blown MPV – that's a people carrier by the way.

Open the rear hatch and there is a large, well shaped and accommodating boot. On each side there is a pull chord which if tugged upon produces two extra seats from the load bay floor.

So that is two up front, three in the middle and two in the boot, just the ticket to keep the kids happy. The adults can then sit back comfortably and let the children interact in their funny little ways. So while the two in the middle discuss the intricacies of the workings of the sun and the moon, the boys in the back sing the jingle of a TV ad for pineapples at the top of their voices.

While they do the Carens eats up the A1 and A66 with alacrity and tackles the twists and turns of County Durham and North Yorkshire with aplomb.

Travel sickness is a funny one particularly when the going is twisty and well practised mums come armed with make-shift sick bags. But none were needed because, even fully loaded with people and paraphernalia, the ride was rock steady with little lurching, rocking and rolling no matter what the Dales roads hurled its way.

With all that baggage performance could be an issue, particularly on a hot day when the climate control was in full use. But the myriad climbs of the test route were dispensed with little thought and the trip computer still refused to drop below the 54 miles per gallon mark.

Young cargo also remained happy thanks to pull up seatback tables which they could use to rest their crayon-pads, iPads and portable DVD players – yes, that's the world we now live in folks.

And the driver? Don't forget the driver; well he is happy too because the Carens drives just like a car, and an excellent one to boot.

Like any of the current crop of Kias it has a sweet motor, a 1.7 litre diesel in this case, a delightful six speed gearbox and great handling which make it child's play to drive. Who says dads can't have fun?

Fact File:

Kia Carens
 Engine: 1.7 litre turbo diesel
 Power: 114PS
 0-62mph: 12.6 secs
 Top speed: 112mph
 Combined miles per gallon: 60.1
 Transmission: six speed manual
 Insurance: 12
 CO2 g/km: 124

