

Relish the



Ride

Ian Lamming tests the new Sportage range topper

Fact File

Kia Sportage KX4

Engine: 2.0 turbo diesel

Power: 181BHP

0-62mph: 9.4 secs

Top speed: 121mph

Combined miles per gallon: 39.2

Transmission: six speed automatic

CO2 g/km: 189

LOOKING at it, still glorious, poised and current, it is hard to believe that the Sportage has been around for so long. It was only the other day when I looked at a number plate that I realized Kia's superb SUV is getting on a bit – at least in automotive terms as it emerged in its current guise in 2010.

There must be a new model on the way – I've already seen pictures of the next Sorento – but it is testament to its incredible design that it looks as good on the road today as it did on the motor show plinth all those years ago.

Another hint to its longevity is the fact that the latest incarnation – the KX4 – is the plushiest and highest specified yet, another clue to its impending replacement, no doubt.

This top of the range Sportage has every toy imaginable. So on the mechanical front it gets the most powerful diesel yet and all wheel drive offering peerless performance and traction on and off the road.

Sportage has always felt great to drive; the KX4 is better still. The powerful yet creamy smooth motor eats up the inclines of hills and dales and glides along the highways with aplomb.

Every aspect oozes quality to rival any SUV on the road at

any price. The automatic gearbox is seamless and sensitive to your needs, the steering sharp, the handling perfect. It's a big car but it feels taut and sharp and is fun to drive.

Inside the KX4 has every gadget imaginable – satnav, rear view camera, parking aids, leather trim, trip computer, decent hi-fi and climate control. There are heated seats, of course, but also a heated steering wheel. If you have ever experienced one you will know in the winter it's no gimmick, it's a delight.

Perfect ergonomics and voluminous amounts of space make the Kia an appealing and comfortable place to be.

Countless people have asked me over the years which SUV to buy and I have recommended the Sportage even to those who are used to owning a premium badge.

The Kia KX4 represents a glorious swansong to a classic design and can only herald greater things to come from a surprising brand.