

Kia Magentis

Featured model: 2.5 V6 LX



NO, THAT'S NOT A CADILLAC Seville, it's Kia's chrome-grilled flagship, the all-new Magentis. The big, bold newcomer replaces the Clarus and is a real eye-opener – not least because it eschews an expected two-litre four-cylinder engine in favour of a 2.5-litre V6 only. There's the option of automatic transmission on the costlier SE model to go with it.

So what looks like a mild-mannered motor with repmobile overtones, in fact proves to be an indecently quick mile-eater whose storming acceleration puts its competitors in the shade. It's wonderfully smooth, too, with what Kia describes as a "soft and colourful" exhaust note. Such is its majestic serenity on a motorway that it's all too easy unknowingly to cruise way over the limit.

Magentis also does a very fair impression of much costlier cars in terms of ride comfort, being softly compliant without feeling floaty. It doesn't react harshly on broken surfaces at lower speeds, either. It does, however, feel rather too "relaxed" to enjoy cornering with gusto. Similarly, you have to treat the accelerator with respect in the wet. Too hard a tread from standstill will induce spectacular wheelspin (no traction control on the LX) and slithery, power-on understeer at roundabouts.

Less impressive is the quality and styling of the grey, plain-Jane facia in which the central radio/CD controls are too fiddly and some of the switches are low set. No complaints otherwise, though. Cushion tilt adjustment, front and rear, helps to achieve a really comfortable

driving position behind the large-ish wheel, with unhampered vision all round. The gears change with light fluidity and the brake pedal has a firm, progressive feel.

Rear passenger space can't quite match the exemplary Mondeo's, but it's not far short. The comfortable seats are generously proportioned and give good support for two, with a folding armrest between them. There's ample width for a less cosseted third passenger.

Standard equipment includes air conditioning (climate control on SE) that can be usefully "tiered" to give warm feet and a cool face, drinks holders, handy storage areas in the centre console, and document pockets on the front seatbacks.

Clever hinges and gas struts hold the boot lid high. There's only a small rear sill, but the wide rear bumper is easy to scuff when loading. Big wheelarches intrude, but the boot is a sensible size, and folding the 60/40-divided backrests forwards gives a lot of extra load space.

VERDICT

So much performance, comfort and serenity in one so modestly priced! We said the Magentis was an eye-opener, but keep them closed and even those "in the know" would swear they were in a much more expensive, upmarket model. It's a fine effort. Only its unfashionable badge and rate of depreciation (despite the low asking price) appear to be serious drawbacks to its success.

AT A GLANCE

considering size, price and rivals

Overtaking ability	★★★★★
Space/practicality	★★★★○
Controls/displays	★★★○○
Safety	★★★○○
Handling/steering	★★○○○
Comfort	★★★★○
Fuel economy	★★○○○

SPECIFICATION

engine 2493cc, V6-cylinder, petrol; 166bhp at 6000rpm, 169 lb ft at 4000rpm; belt-driven double overhead camshafts, 24 valves

transmission 5-speed manual, front-wheel drive; 23.6 mph/1000rpm in 5th, 19.4 in 4th

suspension front: independent coil spring/damper struts, lower wishbones, anti-roll bar. Rear: independent coil spring/damper struts, multi links, anti-roll bar

steering hydraulic power assistance; 2.9 turns lock-to-lock; 11.0m diameter turning circle between kerbs (15.95m for one turn of the wheel)

brakes ventilated discs front, solid discs rear, with electronic anti-lock (ABS) and brake force distribution (EBD) controls

wheels/tyres 6in alloy with 205/60R15V tyres (Hankook Radial 866 on test car); full-size alloy spare

LIKES ...

locks for rear backrests (in boot)
illuminated ignition keyhole
full-size alloy spare wheel
three x 3-point rear seatbelts

and GRIPES

coarse lever adjustment for seatbacks
no front roof/map-reading lamps
beam across front end of boot floor
rear bumper easy to scuff when loading

THE MAGENTIS RANGE

size and type upper-medium (budget-price) 4-door saloon

trim levels LX, SE

engines petrol: V6 cylinder/2.5 litre/166bhp; diesel: none

drive front-wheel drive, 5-speed manual; 4-speed stepped automatic with manual sequential override optional (standard on SE)

OVERTAKING ABILITY

★★★★★

Smooth, refined all-alloy engine suffers from V6 lethargy at low revs. Ah, but oh-so-docile performance around town belies storming acceleration beyond 3500rpm on the open road. Sublime cruiser, too

acceleration in seconds	through gears*	③ rd gear	④ th gear	⑤ th gear	
20-40mph	2.6	5.6	8.4	11.4	
30-50mph	3.0	5.4	8.2	10.8	
40-60mph	3.4	5.1	8.4	11.0	
50-70mph	4.6	5.0	8.5	11.6	
30-70mph	7.6	10.4	16.7	22.4	
max speed in each gear (*using 6500rpm for best acceleration)					
gear	①*	②*	③*	④*	⑤
speed (mph)	34	61	92	127	135

SPACE AND PRACTICALITY ★★★★★				
<i>Not far short of class-leading Mondeo for occupant space. Roomy boot, with 60/40 folding backrests for bigger or longer loads. Parking easier than expected: good vision, fair turning circles help</i>				
<i>in centimetres (4-door saloon)</i>				
outside		inside	(† without sunroof)	
length	473	front - legroom	94-112	
width - inc mirrors	206	- headroom	94-99†	
- mirrors folded	184	rear - typical leg/	106	
height (no roof bars)	141	kneeroom	79	
load sill height	13/64	- headroom	93	
(inside/outside)		- hiproom	131	
steering		load space (all seats in use)	(litres/cu ft)	
turns lock-to-lock	2.9	load length	98-186	
turning circle (metres)	11.0	full length to fascia	278	
easy to park/garage?		load width	95-152	
★★★★○		load height (to shelf)	41-48	

CONTROLS AND DISPLAYS ★★★★★	
<i>Height-only steering adjustment, but excellent driving position with convenient stalk switches and big, clear instruments. Light, slick gearchange, too, plus sensible pedal layout. Audio controls fiddly</i>	
	

HOW THE MAGENTIS 2.5 V6 COMPARES		engine cyl/cap/power (no/cc/bhp)	revs at 70mph (rpm)	30-70mph through gears (sec)	30-70mph in 5th/4th gears (sec)	fuel economy (mpg)	brakes * - best stop from 50mph (m/kg)	maximum legroom - front (cm)	typical leg/ kneeroom - rear (cm)	steering turns/ circle (m)	overall length (cm)
KIA MAGENTIS 2.5 V6		V6/2493/166	2970	7.6	22.4/16.7	27	26½/21	112	106/79	2.9/11.0	473
Daewoo Leganza 2.0 CDX		4/1998/132	3240	9.4	22.6/16.1	30	26/40	109	102/78	3.2/11.4	467
Ford Mondeo 2.5 V6		V6/2495/168	2680	8.5 ^(e)	22/16 ^(e)	28	25/19†	111	108/84	2.8/11.3	473
Rover 75 2.5 V6 (auto)		V6/2497/177	2540	9.3	auto	28	24½/22	114	100/77	3.2/11.3	475
Skoda Octavia 1.8 Turbo		4/1781/150	3040	8.5	19.7/14.4	35½	24/27	112	97/69	3.1/10.5	451
Volvo S60T S		5/1984/180	2880	8.4	20.0/15.3	30	25/16	115	98/73	3.0/11.5	458
		^(e) estimated					* all with ABS † figures for 1.8LX				

SAFETY		★★★★○			
<i>Reasonable tally of safety equipment includes three-point seatbelts and head restraints for all, but LX lacks SE's side airbags. Impressive brakes with ABS and EBD. Alarm and immobiliser are standard</i>					
braking			dry road stopping distance		
pedal feel			from 50 mph (with standard ABS)		
★★★★★○					
in emergency					
★★★★★○					
handbrake					
★★★★○					

EURO NCAP CRASH TEST RATINGS
Magentis not yet tested

SECURITY FEATURES	
central locking ✓	alarm ✓
remote control ✓	immobiliser ✓
auto window closure ✗	luggage security ★★★★★○
deadlocks ✗	
✓ standard	0 factory option ✗ not available

HANDLING AND STEERING ★★★★★	
<i>Biased in favour of comfort, Magentis is no buttoned-down bend-swinger, but nicely weighted steering helpful. LX sorely needs SE's traction control to kill yards of unseemly wheelspin on damp roads</i>	
	
COMFORT ★★★★★	
<i>Firmish on broken surfaces, but ride otherwise softly compliant yet not sloppy. Large, comfortable front seats, plenty of space and support in the back, as well. Hushed at speed. Heating and air con work well</i>	

FUEL ECONOMY ★★★★★	
<i>"You have to pay for your pleasure" - in this case at the pumps. You can eke out 34mpg, but it's no fun. Easy filler. Highest tax band and group 15 insurance. New three-year/unlimited-mileage warranty now standard</i>	
AA test results (mpg)	official figures (mpg)
worst (hard/urban) 17½	urban 20.3
best (gentle/rural) 34½	extra urban 36.2
overall mpg on test 27	combined 28.2
realistic tank capacity 58 litres	CO ₂ emissions 237g/km
typical range 345 miles	car tax band D