



## Sunday drive: Kia e-Niro first drive

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Some manufacturers already offer various solutions to meet owner's practical needs in being able to make those longer trips at-will yet



reduce the CO2 emissions their vehicles emit, *writes David Miles.*

Take as an example Kia, the South Korean brand, which has become hugely popular in the UK with annual sales edging towards 100,000-units. Their vast range of petrol, diesel electric, hybrid and plug-in hybrid models range from small city cars to large SUVs and MPVs includes no less than five different SUV ranges.

SUVs account for around a third of all new cars sold in the EU and UK and Kia has seven hybrid and electric cars on sale in the UK with five more planned by the end of 2021.

Kia already supplies an electric vehicle model in their Soul compact SUV range and their larger Niro Crossover/SUV range includes 1.6 petrol, 1.6 petrol-electric plug-in hybrid and now the all-new e-Niro model, which is pure electric power, and that is the version I plugged



myself into at last week's Kia model range media driving day.



The Kia e-Niro 64kWh 'First Edition' is currently a one model range and costs £32,995 on-the-road after the £3,500 Government grant has been applied. The e-Niro is termed a 'Crossover', in effect elements of SUV styling mixed with the convenience of C-segment hatchback sizing.

It has five doors, five seats, an elevated ride height and loads of specification as standard.

Most importantly it has an official WLTP Combined Cycle driving range between charges of 282 miles but a City driving range of 382 miles. In addition its VED road tax free, its London Congestion Charge free and it emits zero CO2 emissions at the tailpipe but as we know the production of electricity from power stations, even allowing for more wind and solar power,



does produce CO2.



The Kia e-Niro might be new but it has already won several important Car-of-the-Year Awards. It's been termed a 'game-changer' for electric car travel.

It's certainly proving popular with UK customers with the 800 unit's allocation for this year already sold.

There are 1,200 expressions of interest for 2020 from potential UK customers but the global demand for this vehicle is so high that each country is supply restricted.



The e-Niro uses a new purpose designed platform to meet the needs of battery electric, petrol and petrol-electric hybrid propulsion systems. Current Niro petrol and

petrol-electric hybrid models will shortly be replaced with the same power choices but by models using this new platform and overall styling.

The e-Niro has a 64kWh electric motor which produces 201bhp and a massive 395Nm of torque from zero to 3,600rpm. Charging times for the 150kW Li-ion polymer battery vary depending on what private or public charging point is used.





A household AC 3-pin supply will take massive 29-hours for a zero to 100% charge, a 7.2kW charging point does the same charge in just under 10-hours but



using DC 50KW high speed charging for 0 to 80% takes 1 hour 15-minutes and a DC 100kW point takes 54 minutes for 0 to 80% capacity.

Kia estimate a home full charge will cost around £4 depending on what tariff is used by the customer. Public charging point costs vary hugely depending on the high premium price applied at the facility by the supplier/operator.

Drive to the front wheels is through a simple one speed forward, one speed reverse transmission operated by a centre console mounted dial marked D for drive, R for reverse and a centre P push-button for park. So its press the accelerator and go to the sound of a faint whine from the electric motor.

There are the usual Eco, Normal and Sport driving modes and there is significant difference between all of them but the Eco mode is more than adequate for most driving conditions. The vehicle also has regenerative braking for electric power harvesting to extend the driving range.

This can be adjusted on-the-move by using the steering column mounted paddles. The



strength of the power harvesting in its maximum setting is very noticeable and very quickly reduces the speed of the vehicle to almost a standstill providing one-pedal driving in-town. On this maximum setting the rear brake lights are illuminated to warn following drivers the vehicle is slowing down.

With the huge battery pack mounted low-down in the vehicle the weight of its mass keeps the e-Niro very firmly planted to the road during cornering, the steering felt on the light side but it remained precise enough during my 40-mile test drive using winding Cotswold roads this week with some busy in-town stop-start driving included.



There was plenty of information supplied by the on-board computer as to the battery power used and the range remaining. It seemed to work out that 1% of power used per one mile travelled so the Combined Cycle range of 282-miles seemed accurate.



Interestingly the display also showed that my test drive saved 10.2lbs of CO2 weight compared to a similar sized petrol engine. The standard fit sat-nav system also showed the nearest public charging points and the distance to them for peace of mind travel.

The spec is high just like any other top level SUV with all the usual modern-day driving safety aids and it all looked and felt well put together with a comfortable ride and plenty of interior space and load carrying capacity with ample rear seat legroom. It's very easy to drive but it takes a little longer to understand all the driving support information.





Electrically powered cars of varying sizes and types are the way forward, they have to be, to meet forthcoming CO2 emissions regulations and the new Kia e-Niro is certainly a 'game changer' in that direction.

**MILESTONES:** Kia e-Niro 64kWh First Edition all electric 'Crossover' £32,995 after the Government's £3,500 grant is applied

**Drivetrain:** 201bhp, 395Nm electric motor, 150kw battery pack, 1 forward, 1 reverse gear ratios, front wheel drive

**Performance:** 104mph, 0-60mph 7.5-seconds, WLTP full charge driving range for City driving 382-miles, Combined Cycle 282-miles

**CO2** 0g/km VED road tax free, London Congestion Charge free, BiK company car tax 13%

**Insurance group:** 28      **Warranty:** 7-years/100,000-miles

**Dimensions/capacities:** L 4,375mm, W 1,805mm, H 1,570mm, wheelbase 2,700mm, boot/load space 451 to 1,405-litres, 5-doors/5-seats

**For:** Spacious, practical, long real-life CO2 free driving range, good acceleration and driving pace, easy to drive, well equipped, long warranty.

**Against:** Long waiting list, purchase price is hard to justify for some customers compared to petrol/diesel powered estates and SUVs of a similar size.