

# Road beat: Kia K900 is understated luxury



The Kia K900 is elegance redefined. Photos/Larry Weitzman

**By Larry Weitzman**

Kia is now in the super luxury car business. First they blew us away with the Kia Cadenza, a near luxury/luxury car that the Road Beat was thoroughly impressed with. It had everything, ride, handling stellar performance, good fuel economy, superb quality and great looks. What was not to like? Now a year later Kia dropped another explosive car, the K900. Not much of a name, but oh, what a car.

As you know by now, Kia and Hyundai are effectively two brands owned by the same company so most everything is shared by respective models. It saves money for both. But unlike other

manufactures, the exterior and interiors have no sharing. Sharing is in the chassis and powertrains. So while the K900 has mechanical similarities to the ultra luxury vehicle marketed under the name Hyundai Equus, they don't look alike and have completely different identities.



### **Specifications**

Price \$60,400 to \$66,400

Engine 5.0L, DOHC, 32 Valve

V-8 420 hp @6,400 rpm

376 lb.-ft. of torque @  
5,000 rpm

Transmission

8 speed automatic

Configuration

Longitudinal front  
engine/rear wheel drive

### **Dimensions**

Wheelbase 119.9 inches

Length 200.6 inches

Width 74.8 inches

Height 58.7 inches

Track (f/r) 63.8/64.1 inches

Weight 4,555 pounds

Fuel capacity 19.8 gallons

Trunk capacity 15.9 gallons

Steering lock to lock 2.96  
turns

Cabin volume 110.8 cubic feet

Wheels 19X9 inch alloys

Tires (f/r) 245/45/275/40

### **Performance**

0-60 mph 5.32 seconds

50-70 mph 2.81 seconds

50-70 mph uphill 3.56 seconds

Top speed Does anyone really care?

Fuel economy EPA rated 15/23/18 mpg

city/highway/combined.

Expect 18-19 mpg in suburban, rural driving; 29 mpg on a level highway at 70 mph.

K900 has a cleaner look, with no swoops or extraneous lines. The front end is simple and clean with a wide mouth grille with an interior surround that has Kia's trademark slight indentations. But what makes the K900 special are the super trick LED headlights. Well done, Kia. The understated and elegant body is pulled taught from the rear creating a muscular surface tension. In addition you can see the striking resemblance between the K900 and the Cadenza.

It is a large car with a 120-inch wheelbase and a length of 200.6 inches. While it looks low, K900 isn't with a height of 59 inches. But width is a bit narrow at 75 inches making handling in tight places a bit easier. Interior dimensions are huge with nearly 111 cubic feet of cabin volume plus a 16 cubic foot trunk. Limousine proportions abound in the rear seating area.

K900 is so smooth and quiet the entire car feels like its two

tons of creamy butter. And that goes for the entire vehicle, mechanicals and interior appointments. You need to experience this ride; it is special, very special.

Under the hood is a silky DOHC, 32 valve V-8 that cranks out 420 of the quietest and smoothest horses ever encountered by this cowboy (and I have had more than a few) at 6,400 rpm accompanied by 376 pounds of twist at 5,000 rpm, meaning this engine is making about 358 hp at that engine speed. The power is transferred to the rear wheels via a baby-butt smooth 8-speed automatic tranny, a tranny that sometimes seems slow to respond. Of course the systems have every piece of electronic wizardry available to mankind such as traction control, an Advanced Vehicle Safety Management system and probably the ability of direct communication with the International Space Station.

Performance is absolutely world-class with an average 0-60 mph elapsed time of 5.32 seconds. The acceleration seems to increase with speed. Catch the right gear at the right time; it almost gets scary quick. And it does it with an uncanny quiet and smoothness. Passing performance is equally exhilarating with 50-70 mph simulated passing times of 2.81 and up a 6 percent grade barely slowing that time to 3.56 seconds. The K900 rocks. Now here is the best part, the K900's comparatively amazing fuel economy. EPA rates the K900 V-8 at a somewhat guilt ridden 15/23/18 mpg city/highway/combined. But during 400 miles of mostly suburban driving and only 40 miles of highway time, mostly driven for testing, the big K900 average between 18-19 mpg. The K900 averaged 24 mpg in a roundtrip from Placerville over the Sierra to South Lake Tahoe and back. On top of that in a two-way average the K900 averaged 29 mpg on a level highway at 70 mph. The engine spins a low 1,750 rpm at that speed. With its 20-gallon fuel tank, an easy 500 plus miles is doable nonstop.

Being a sophisticated, world-class automobile means a sophisticated world-class suspension that it has in the form

of a refined MacPherson strut system upfront and a multilink system on the rear. It rides on 19 x 9 inch alloys with huge 245/45 series tires up front and superwide 275/40s in the rear. Track is also wide at 64 inches and steering is a reasonably quick 2.96 turns lock to lock. That should add up to fantastic handling, but it doesn't and the reason is there is little feedback through the numb steering. That doesn't mean the K900 doesn't corner, it does. The cornering power with the wide track and big wheels and tires is tenacious, it just takes some attention and concentration to guide it when your speed is close to excessive and the road bends. Now we are talking here about racetrack like conditions, not normal driving where the K900 is an absolute pleasure to navigate.

Remember maneuvering in tight places? Well the K900 makes it easy with front and rear cameras, plus giving you a 360-degree vertical view of everything surrounding your car (Around view monitor) as you move. That system was a first for me and simply amazing. You should never bump into anything ever again.

By now you must think that the K900 rides beautifully and it does soaking up bumps like nobody's business. And it does it in a very muted way. But it is not a floater; the ride is also very solid and controlled. The quiet of the K900 is deafening. There is no road, wind and engine noise, none. About the only time you get to hear it's wonderful V-8 burble is at half throttle or more. Although it lets you know it's there with a muted roar at full throttle.



Plenty of room for passengers.

Braking is by four-wheel ventilated discs at all four corners and they are powerful stopping the big Kia in 42 feet from 40 mph. K900 has just about every conceivable system, TV screen display, and beeper warnings to attempt to keep you safe. It is a buffet of safety. Even the heads up display has a blind spot detection display and a lane departure warning system. The next thing will be a ballistic recovery system that will automatically deploy a parachute if you drive off a cliff or flotation devices beyond the multiple airbags if you took an inadvertent sea cruise. LED lighting is outstanding.

Soft Nappa leather covers the seats and most everything inside is soft touch materials. Rear seat leg room is about the most copious I have ever seen. Instrumentation is a complete TFT LCD cluster displaying an analog tach and speedo plus ancillary gauges and a trip computer. Good stuff. Kia claims 17 speakers for its Lexicon sound system. I often thought I was in a much nicer appointed Carnegie Hall.

Operating the basic sound system is fairly easy, but getting deeper into all its features does require some learning. It is a bit complex. Both seat controls are located conveniently on the doors. The trunk is a large 16 cubic feet and well shaped with the trunk hinges enclosed for protecting any cargo. The quality of the materials and fit and finish are second to none.

Pricing starts for the V-8 at \$59,500 plus \$900 for the boat from Korea. My tester had the \$6,000 VIP package which contained the TFT instrument display, the Surround view monitor, head's up display, Smart cruise control, Advanced Vehicle Safety Management System and some other items. Fancy carpeted embroidered floor mats are standard! Personally, I would go with the standard K900 without the VIP package. In value terms, K900 sets new standards. And a new 311 hp V-6 model is coming and will be thousands less.

*Larry Weitzman has been into cars since he was 5 years old. At 8 he could recite from memory the hp of every car made in the U.S. He has put in thousands of laps on racetracks all over the Western United States.*