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QUICK TAKE: KIA K900/K9

An exercise in traditional automotive luxury, from a new player

Jan Tegler
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Sailing over the heaving back roads of northern-Maryland farm country we set a polite pace, encouraged by the traditionally-tuned balance of a lavish new 5.1-meter-long, rear-drive sedan from Kia - yes, Kia.

The launch of Kia's K900 flagship this year led to head-scratching and a considerable number of furrowed brows among automotive enthusiasts. In western markets where high-end luxury has become the province of mainly German automakers - Jaguar, Aston-Martin, Cadillac and Maserati excepted - the idea of a Korean competitor met with some confusion.

After some time behind the wheel though, things become clearer.

The K900, known in Korea as the K9, should be viewed with Asia in mind. All over the continent, particularly in China, automotive 'luxury' is thought of much in the way it was viewed in Europe and the U.S. in past generations - meant to cosset and pamper their owners, not to hurl them forward at sports car velocities.

This is the approach Kia has taken with the K900.



INSIDER KNOWLEDGE



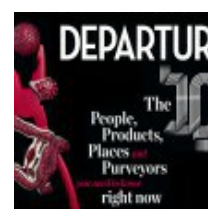
Only if we understand the past can we move forward to analyse the present and, as the last stage, look into the future.

Alexander Mankowsky - Mercedes-Benz trend scout

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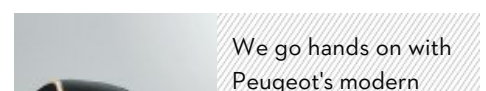


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That's not to suggest that it's a dynamically weak driver. True, the K900 exhibits more body-roll through corners than you would find in any Audi A8, BMW 7-Series or Mercedes S-Class. But it's well controlled, encouraging disciplined driving rather than fangs-out ferocity. Impolite as it seems to step hard on the K900, the quiet 420 horsepower V8 up front will push this 2097-kilogram four-door to 100 km/h in 5.7 seconds.

Once understood, the K900 more than delivers on the promise of traditional luxury, loaded with amenities for thousands less than the base price of the competition.

See more on the Kia US webpages



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