
Kia EV5 driving report: On the way to the next "world car" title?

Von Frank Wald

Will Kia achieve the World Car of the Year hat-trick with the EV5? In 2024, the EV9 large SUV was named "World Car of the Year 2024", followed by the EV3 compact SUV last year. Now the electric counterpart to the Kia Sportage is in the starting blocks - and once again on the shortlist of the top ten candidates. And certainly not without good reason, as we can see after the first rounds with the electric mid-size SUV. We will find out on April 1, when the awards ceremony takes place at the New York Auto Show.

However, this time it will be a tight race, as in addition to the competition from the company's own Hyundai Ioniq 9 and Palisade as well as its brand brother Kia EV4, class rivals such as the BMW iX3, BYD Seal 6 DM-i, Nissan Leaf and the Audi Q5 and Toyota RAV4 from the combustion engine faction are also nominated. In fact, with the EV5, Kia is entering a segment of the electric market that is one of the largest and fastest growing vehicle classes in Europe. The VW ID 4 and ID 5, Skoda Enyaq, Tesla Model Y and Renault Scenic E-Tech set the tone here. However, the Korean electric car can certainly keep up, especially in terms of spaciousness and driving comfort.

Even the first contact leaves a good impression. With its angular appearance, the massive hood and the brand-typical light signature, it fits seamlessly into Kia's electric SUV family between the EV3 and EV9. The 4.61-metre long, 1.88-metre wide and 1.68-metre high body looks stately and self-confident with its clear lines and flat design, but feels less bulky in city traffic than the figures suggest. The high seating position provides a good overview, the body is easy to assess and the clear design language helps when maneuvering. In the top GT-Line version that we drove, dark accents, specific rims and details in high-gloss black provide a subtle sporty touch.

Even if the drive system does not reflect this throughout. The EV5's electric motor transmits up to 160 kW (218 hp) to the front wheels. As is usual with electric cars, its maximum torque of 295 Nm is available right from the start, accelerating the SUV, which weighs more than two tons, to 100 km/h in 8.4 seconds. The top speed is 165 kilometers per hour. Although this is perfectly adequate for everyday use, it does not make a sporty statement. In comparison, it is even slower than its little electric brother, the EV3, which reaches the 100 km/h mark in just 7.7 seconds despite having less power (150 kW). The higher weight and size really have an impact here.

There are also technical compromises to be made. Although the EV5 is also based on the E-GMP platform, it does without the 800-volt architecture of its larger brothers, the EV6 and EV9. For the 81.4 kWh battery with a maximum of 150 kW, this means charging times of around 30 minutes for 10 to 80 percent. Standard for the class, but not outstanding. The range also remains realistic rather than record-breaking: with 18-inch wheels, up to 530 kilometers should be possible, while the GT-Line we drove with 19-inch tires should run out of juice 25 kilometers earlier. Here, too, the smaller EV3 with an identical battery manages a good 100 kilometers further. After our test drive in spring-like temperatures of 16 degrees in and around Barcelona with many mountainous passages, the consumption settled at 23.4 kWh per 100 kilometers - not a peak value, but still within reasonable limits considering the size and weight.

In city traffic, the EV5 impresses with its balanced set-up. Despite its size, the e-SUV feels easy to handle, which is also due to the long wheelbase of 2.75 meters. It ensures stability and composure, even on poor roads. The recuperation system is easy to operate. Several levels can be set via steering wheel paddles, supplemented by an automatic mode and i-Pedal-Drive. The transitions between coasting, deceleration and braking are harmonious and easy to control.

This impression is confirmed on the country road. The suspension filters out bumps with

ease. The steering is smooth, albeit rather synthetic, but offers sufficient precision. Even at high speed on the highway, the car remains calm and controllable without demanding too much of the driver, making it a comfortable touring car. Wind and rolling noise only increase audibly at higher speeds. The numerous assistance systems work largely inconspicuously, apart from the beeping prescribed throughout the EU. But at least Kia has found a patented solution for the three most annoying ones. The cruise warning can be quickly deactivated by pressing and holding the volume roller on the right-hand side of the steering wheel, while a short or long press on the left-hand button deactivates the steering and lane departure warning systems.

In general, the interior is characterized by functionality with a feel-good factor. The cockpit looks tidy, the familiar continuous display landscape, consisting of two 12.3-inch screens for the instrument cluster and infotainment and a 5.3-inch screen for the climate control in between, is logically integrated and intuitive to operate. There are also numerous analog buttons for the standard functions. The materials and workmanship make a solid impression. Everything you touch feels good, although hard plastic is also used in the lower section. The seats are clearly designed for long-distance comfort, with a massage seat in the GT-Line providing additional relaxation.

Another of the EV5's great strengths is its spaciousness. Thanks to the long wheelbase, even tall rear passengers can enjoy comfortable leg and headroom in the rear seats. Behind them, the trunk has a capacity of 566 liters, or up to 1650 liters with the rear seats folded down. The flat loading area could even be converted into a weekend sleeping area. There is also a 44-liter frunk under the front hood as storage space for the charging cable. The EV5 can also tow up to 1200 kilograms and (in the top GT-Line version) has a V2L function that can be used to operate external devices - a plus point for camping, crafts or outdoor use.

In terms of price, the Kia EV5 is on a par with the competition. The basic "Air" version starts at 45,990 euros and already comes with 18-inch rims, navigation, dual-zone automatic air conditioning, reversing camera, smart key and extensive assistance systems including highway assist. The mid-range "Earth" line (from 48,990 euros) adds 19-inch wheels, 3-zone automatic air conditioning, heat pump, heated steering wheel, electric seats and a sensor-controlled tailgate. The top-of-the-range "GT-Line" version (from €51,990) offers comfort features such as a massage seat, Harman/Kardon sound system, ambient lighting and V2L function in addition to the black accents. Regardless of the equipment line, Kia's seven-year warranty remains a strong argument, especially in the electric segment, where many buyers are looking for long-term security.

The bottom line is that the EV5 shows a clear positioning: it is not the sportiest or most technically radical representative of its class, but one that is convincing in everyday driving, with quietness, comfort and a coherent overall package of space, equipment and price. And that could ultimately convince the 98 motoring journalists from 33 countries on the WCOTY jury once again. (aum)

Data Kia EV5

Length x width x height (m): 4.61 x 1.88 x 1.68
Wheelbase (m): 2.75
Drive: Electric, 160 kW (218 PS), front-wheel drive, automatic transmission
Max. Torque: 295 Nm
Top speed: 165 km/h
Acceleration 0 to 100 km/h: 8.4 sec.
WLTP average consumption: 16.9 kWh (18-inch tires)
Battery capacity: 81.4 kWh
Range (WLTP): max. 530 km (18-inch tires)
Max. Charging power: 11 kW AC/ 150 kW DC
Unladen weight / payload: 2069 kg / 511 kg
Trunk capacity: 566-1650 liters + 44.4 liters (frunk)
Towing capacity: 1200 kg
Price: from 45,990 euros

Images for article



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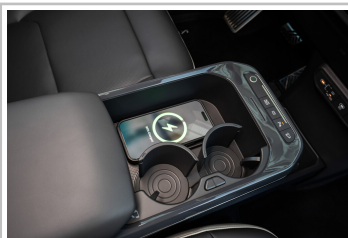


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