

# A PIRATE LOOKS AT 40

## Young rebel moves into maturity

BY JOE SAGE

**T**hough actually only in its eleventh year, not 40th, the new Kia Soul has reminded us of a classic Jimmy Buffett song title. What happens when a youthful rebel hits middle age? The original Kia Soul emerged in a time of change, bringing a lively new identity to smaller vehicles in general and to the Kia brand, which after its introduction referred for a few years to the era “since Soul,” as the smallish economy car maker grew into a giant.

Taking cues from Japanese “kei cars,” the gen-one Soul was on the cute side—represented by the Hamstar rockin’ hamsters. Gen-three is a couple of inches longer, adding legroom and cargo volume. Other dimensions are unchanged, but an evolution from its lower-mid-side molding (gen one), then crease (gen two), to an upward-sloping lower crease (gen three), gives it more of a slab-side yet forward-dynamic appearance and visually moves away from the trailing-roof feel of earlier models.

Most notably, the face has changed considerably, moving from hamster-cute to a bolder yet still edgy look reminiscent to us of Boba Fett’s helmet in *Star Wars*. The vehicle is also quickly recognizable from the rear by its high-wrapped taillights.

Our sample is one of two new trims, X-Line (the

other is GT-Line). At four grand more than the base model, X-Line brings lower side cladding, bolder wheel arches, X-Line 18-inch wheels, fog lights, highlighted roof rails and optional two-tone paint. You can’t really build it up toward a higher trim (no engine, transmission or infotainment options), leaving you with handheld keyed entry and start, manual climate control, and a base audio unit (which persisted in pulling our music source out of shuffle constantly, forcing a new hand-set every time).

All trims have the same moderately powered engine, except for the top turbo model (see sidebar), and all have the same IVT transmission (an “intelligent” CVT) except for the turbo (with a DCT) or an option of IVT or manual on the base model.

The price walk is tight, as is typical on a less expensive vehicle, all the tighter now with six trims. This leaves the almost-30-grand turbo or the base model with manual as the most distinct versions, with others in between a somewhat complex set of tradeoffs in features and/or personal taste.

While other novelty boxes of 10 or 15 years ago have faded away, Kia Soul—not quite as “iconic” as, say, VW Beetle, Mustang or Model T, but close—has stood the test of time and evolved well. ■

### SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	2.0L DOHC 16v inline-4
DRIVETRAIN	FWD
HP/TORQUE	147 hp / 132 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	IVT (Intelligent Variable Transmission)
SUSPENSION	F: MacPherson strut, gas shocks, stblzr bar; R: coupled torsion beam axle, gas shocks
STEERING	elec motor-driven power steering
BRAKES	F: 11.0 vented; R: 10.3 solid
WHEELS / TIRES	(X-Line) 7.5Jx18 alloy / P235/45 R18
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	165.2 / 102.4 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	6.7 in
TURNING CIRCLE	34.8 ft
HEADROOM (F/R)	39.4 / 39.5 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	41.1 / 38.8 in
CARGO CAPACITY	24.2 to 18.7 (w board) / 62.1 cu.ft
FUEL / CAPACITY	87 octane reg unl / 14.3 gal
MPG	27/33/30 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE	<b>\$21,490</b>
CARPETED FLOOR MATS	130
DESTINATION CHARGE	995

TOTAL	<b>\$22,615</b>
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- Lineup:** **LX:** 6-spd manual this trim only (opt IVT), 16" steel wheels, 7" UVO touchscreen..... **\$17,490**  
**S:** 16" alloy wheels, Tricot cloth seats, fwd collision avoidance, blind spot collision warning..... **20,290**  
**GT-Line:** 18" GT-Line alloys, leather wheel and shift knob, red accents front bumper & side sills..... **20,290**  
**X-Line:** 18" X-Line alloys, X-Line body kit, leather wheel and shift knob, roof rails..... **21,490**  
**EX:** 17" alloys (18" avail), keyless entry/start, power driver's seat incl lumbar, heated front seats, dual-zone auto climate..... **22,690**  
**GT-Line Turbo:** 201 hp / 195 lb-ft 1.6L direct-inject turbo, 7-spd dual-clutch trans (DCT), 18" alloys, bigger brakes, 10.25" UVO touchscreen w Nav, Harmon/Kardon audio, smart cruise control..... **27,490**

### SOUL EV (2019 PRICING)

EV	<b>\$33,950</b>
EV+	heated/vented leather, other upgrades... <b>35,950</b>

