

Luxury liner

by Joe Sage

If you're shopping minivans, you know there are now only a handful of this once-dominant vehicle type. You will also discover that the Kia Carnival actively resists being in this category, instead identifying as a multi-purpose vehicle—an MPV—a nod to a market now dominated by SUVs, despite one of its most defining features being its sliding rear doors (often considered the defining difference between an SUV and a minivan).

In its self-defined category of one, Kia Carnival wins at everything. But it's really not being fair to itself with this approach, as it competes strongly, and in some aspects dominates, as a minivan (and also as an SUV). On the latter, Kia Carnival is extremely spacious—its cargo volume, seats up or down, is almost a perfect match for the biggest domestic three-row SUVs—yet almost 20 inches shorter and a half-ton lighter, for easier parking and a far tighter turning circle. And Carnival does have those sliding doors.

In the realm of minivans, Carnival offers a typical variety of seven- or eight-seat configurations, some by trim and some optional by trim, as well as various split-folding and reclining features by row. Legroom is generous in all versions—over 40 inches in the first row and second, both (on a par with a big crew cab pickup), and just a fraction of

an inch below three feet in the third row. More distinctive still is a front seat free mode, optional on base trim and standard on others, with movement along a sliding rail providing table and tray areas. And the “killer app” comes with SX Prestige trim (as our sample here)—second-row VIP lounge seats with one-touch sliding-reclining power relaxation mode—for seemingly endless legroom and massive comfort well beyond most any jetliner's first class, an upgrade that's yours ever day.

To us, that VIP seating is a deal clincher, and, if budget allows, we'd go right for that top trim.

What's more, the entire lineup starts in the lower \$30s and even that top trim tops out well under \$50k (for 2024, while for 2025, these inflationary times nudge the top trim just above that mark).

Ride is firm and accurate atop well-engineered standard suspension backed up by gas shocks.

All this adds one more big piece of news—for 2025, the full Kia Carnival line (other than the base LX) is available in hybrid form, for just \$2,000 more at any level. And this strongly tackles one more key comparative point in the minivan world. (Hybrid fuel mileage has not yet been certified.)

Put it all together, and you have a not-a-minivan in which the adults may wish to ride in the second row, comfortably reclined and catching a movie or two, though it will always be welcome for the entire family. And it does have those sliding doors. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY	.....Gwangmyeong, S Korea
ENGINE	.....3.5L V6 gasoline dir inj (GDI) 24v
HP/TORQUE	.....290 hp / 262 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	.....8-spd auto, H-Matic shift
DRIVETRAIN	.....FWD
SUSPENSION	.....F: MacPherson strut, stblzr bar; R: multi-link; gas shocks
STEERING	.....column-mtd motor-driven power
BRAKES	.....F: 12.8 vented; R: 12.8 solid
WHEELS/TIRES	.....7.5x19 alloy, black / P235/55R19
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	.....203.0 / 121.7 in
OVERHANG (F/R)	.....36.8 / 44.5 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	.....6.8 in
TURNING CIRCLE	.....(third party) 37.3 ft
HEADROOM (F/2/3)	.....40.9 / 39.5 / 38.6 in
LEGROOM (F/2/3)	.....41.1 / 40.5 / 35.6 in
CARGO CAPACITY	.....40.2 to 145.1 cu.ft
WEIGHT	.....4727 lb
TOW CAPACITY	.....3500 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	......87 oct reg unl / 19.0 gal
MPG	.....19/26/22 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE (see newer pricing, below)	.....\$46,300
PAINT: Ceramic Silver	.....495
REAR ENTERTAINMENT: dual screen	.....1000
FLOOR MATS: carpeted, luxury	.....225
CARGO MAT	.....95
DESTINATION CHARGE	.....1365

TOTAL.....**\$49,480**

2024-2025 KIA CARNIVAL LINEUP

	2024	2025	hybrid '25
LX	\$33,600	\$36,500	--
LXS	--	38,500	\$40,500
EX	39,100	40,700	42,700
SX	42,300	45,600	47,600
SX Prestige	▼ 46,700	50,600	52,600



Kia Carnival was originally Kia Sedona in the US. Less a name change and more a unification, it had always been the Carnival in most of the world.

