TRANSFORMED

BY JOE SAGE

Kia Seltos—the brand's smallest SUV—has, by their own description, been reimagined as a small Telluride for generation two. It is a dramatic and effective move. Our 2027 Seltos X-Line SX AWD is the top trim, which takes it from the 147-hp 2.0-liter in other trims, to a 190-hp 1.6-liter turbo-4 in just this trim—almost 30 percent more powerful, still achieving 30 mpg highway, and with a base price about 60 percent that of Telluride. In addition to the engine difference, this powertrain moves from the iVT or intelligent CVT in all other trims (aside from a turbo hybrid joining the lineup soon with a 6-speed DCT), to an 8-speed automatic only on the X-Line SX.

We conveniently also have the Telluride in this issue, making it easy for you to compare specs in more detail. Most tradeoffs are as expected, with two that stand out being [a] that a tall person can't lie down and sleep in the Seltos, and [b] while Telluride tows 4,500 to 5,500 pounds, depending on version, Seltos is not tow-rated at all.

Migrations both larger and smaller happen regularly in various vehicle lineups, of course. Overall, the new Seltos, in its new look, translates so well from the big Telluride, we found ourselves contemplating, had this come first, whether the Telluride translates just as well from the new Seltos. It's a styling treatment that fits each to a T.

In this case, it works all the moreso because Kia has its range of other SUVs in between, and those are still distinct, so all the more clever an idea.

Being derived from the endlessly award-winning Telluride brings in the new Seltos pretty much already at the top of its game, partly by translation, while also certainly on its own merits.

Being as much a clean-sheet new build as a Telluride style derivative, there are any number of differences—a bit simpler suspension (although adding advanced valve shocks while getting rid of stblzr bars, things like that, not necessarily lesser or greater, just tailored approaches. Being a two-row to Telluride's three, the turning circle is more than three feet tighter than Telluride (and well below our 36-foot hero benchmark). Inside, this subcompact does not feel tiny. Seltos legroom is generous, while headroom is about the same as the bigger Telluride (officially a midsize). There are apples and oranges aplenty, as you dig into it all.

The powertrain is well executed, proving itself in a variety of conditions—in town, on freeways and during a great two-lane mountain highway romp. Acceleration is smooth, even in right angle turns from full stop at red lights, that seem (to us) to confuse many other 8-speeds, often exaggerating or hesitating through a quick series of lower shift points. Not this.



Drive modes include one option for normal or sport, and what appear to be separate, or overlaid, options for snow-mud-sand. We prefer modes to not be needed, per se, atop the basic engineering, rather icing on the cake. That said, we liked sport mode on this, adding performance headroom on our adventuresome open roads, with what seemed a bit tighter steering and shift points, appreciated everywhere. We could probably run this way all the time, if it doesn't require resets.

Features generated a wide range of commendation—seat (and wheel) heating and cooling right where you need it before you even hunt. Satisfying tiny details, the kind they didn't have to do but did, such as not only does it turn audio off before you open the door, annoyingly rare on others, but rather than going silent abruptly, it adds the quickest little fade to zero, a nice touch. Enter in the dark, and the start button light pulses—a simple idea and another good one. Everything is well thought out. Kia's engineering and design minds are already at work, but they go above and beyond.

All in all, we had a great week with our new "half price Telluride." This is stronger, more distinct and more meaningful branding than Seltos has had prior, and it carries through in product. Smaller, less powerful, less expensive, all as you would expect, it also proves itself to be more than the sum of those parts. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY	Gwangju, SKorea
ENGINE/TRANS BUILD	SKorea / SKorea
PARTS CONTENT	SKorea 90% / US/Can 0%
ENGINE	1.6L turbo GDI, 16v, alum/alum
HP/TORQUE	190 hp / 195 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO	10.0:1
TRANSMISSION	8-spd auto
DRIVETRAIN	full-time AWD (FWD also available on lower trims)
SUSPENSION	advanced valve shocks; **F:** MacPherson struts; **R:** multi-link
STEERING	elec rack & pinion
BRAKES	**F:** vented; **R:** solid
WHEELS	7.5x19J alloys
TIRES	P235/45R19
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	174.4 / 110.2 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	8.1 in
TURNING CIRCLE	35.16 ft
HEADROOM (F/R)	(snrf) 38.5 / 38.4 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	41.3 / 38.9 in
CARGO CAPACITY	27.8 / 64.2 cu.ft
ROOF LOAD	220 lb
WEIGHT	3549-3715 lb
TOW CAPACITY	na
FUEL / CAPACITY	reg unl / 13.2 gal
MPG	24/30/26 (city/hwy/comb)
BASE PRICE	**$32,790**
X-LINE SX PRESTIGE PKG:	12.3-in touchscreen w nav, 12.3-in instrument display, Harman/Kardon premium audio, driver's relaxation seat, driver's seat & mirrors memory, vented front seats, nav-based smart cruise-curve, blind-spot view monitor, surround view, hwy driving assist, reverse parking collision-avoidance assist, side parking distance warning 2500
ALL-SEASON FLOOR LINERS	220
CARPETED FLOOR MATS	200
DESTINATION CHARGE	1495
TOTAL	**$37,205**

2027 KIA SELTOS LINEUP

147-hp 2.0L MPI & IVT	FWD	AWD
LX	$24,990	$26,690
S	26,390	28,090
X-Line S		28,990
EX	28,390	30,090
190-hp 1.6L turbo-GDI & 8-spd auto		AWD
X-Line SX		▼ $32,790
(hp tbd) 1.6L turbo hybrid & 6-spd DCT	FWD	AWD
(hybrid tbd)		tbd

SOON: 2027 KIA SELTOS HYBRID

Rounding out the lineup will be a hybrid powertrain, which is a first for the Seltos. An advanced 1.6-liter four-cylinder hybrid engine is paired with a 6-speed dual clutch transmission designed to enhance both performance and efficiency. A front-wheel drive HEV improves driving efficiency, while available e-AWD, a Kia first on a HEV SUV, provides more power with on-demand all-wheel-drive capability for a broader driving experience. More information on the Seltos HEV has been promised by year-end, with official fuel economy figures also available closer to the on-sale date.