

WHEELS & CAR CARE

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Page 4



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Take the confusion out of changing coolant

Page 6



8 Pages

Special pullout section



2008 Sorento continues Kia's 'Power to Surprise'

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Special to The IFF

LAKE LOUISE, Alta.— Kia has come from the back of the auto industry pack to become one of the leaders in the matter or a few years.

The Korean automaker bills itself as having the "Power to Surprise" and it surely has done that.

For instance, April set an all-time sales record for Kia while sales in June of this year were up 13 per cent over June 2006. In terms of quality, it rose last year from 24th to 12th in J. D. Power quality ratings, finishing ahead of such names as BMW and Acura.

Quality and price are the tools Kia has used to make these gains, coupled with its no quibble 5-5-5 warranty.

Kia has also gauged the Canadian market very accurately. The Rondo CUV that offers a V6 engine and all-wheel-drive for under \$24,000 is a roaring Canadian sales success, with Kia having trouble trying to get enough to meet demand.

In designing the 2008 Sorento, Kia vice-president, sales and marketing, Dean Tesser said, "Canadians want four-wheel-drive (4WD) systems especially for our climatic conditions."

The 2008 Sorento then is strictly 4WD not an all-wheel-drive. As such, Kia went with a body on frame design not a unit-body or car-based chassis. With nine steel cross members on the frame, this is a stout truck. It is designed to go where the getting is tough with two steel skid plates below and 208 mm (8.2 inches) of clearance from the lowest point on the Sorento to the ground, which is greater than Toyota Highlander or Jeep Grand Cherokee. With the nose and tail bobbed off for traversing tough terrain, the approach angle at the front is 28 degrees and 26 degrees at the rear.

There are two trim levels differentiated mainly by engine and drive train. A five-speed automatic with sequential manual shift mode is found on both versions. Standard equipment includes four-wheel disc brakes with ABS and traction control, Electronic Stability Control (ESP), and a brace of seven airbags including one for the driver's knees.

The Sorento LX that starts at \$32,495 has a 3.3-litre DOHC V6 with 242 hp and 228 lb/ft of torque with a

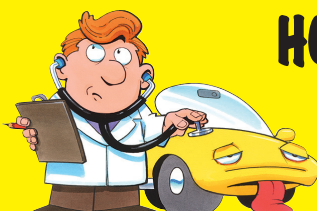
See KIA, pg. 5

The 2008 Kia Sorento is outwardly only slightly changed but everything under the skin is new, like a choice of two V6 engines and a full body on frame with nine steel cross members. Photo by Jim Robinson

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