

The 2009 Kia Borrego is exceptionally well equipped

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I spent a lot of time in an EX V8. It uses the same 4.6-litre DOHC V8 as the Hyundai Genesis luxury sedan. And like the Genesis, the V8 is very, and I mean very quiet in operation especially with the six-speed automatic. Gear changes were imperceptible. Even the big 18-inch tires didn't put up SUV howl, but I put that down to the extensive work on noise, vibration and harshness work that went into Genesis.

Another factor was the decision to go with unequal A-arms for the front suspension. While MacStruts are an elegant way of freeing up room at the front end, four A-arms make for a more compliant ride. At the rear, a very beefy independent multi-link system is used.

With 276 hp, the V6 has similar punch and the same quiet demeanor on the highway, although I did not try it on the off-road portion.

Inside the Borrego feels bigger than it looks on the outside. The leather-lined EX has great seats with thick bolsters. The black leather with Kia signature amber instrument lighting made me feel like I was inside an Audi Q7.



With either part time or full time four-wheel-drive, the Kia Borrego makes short work of most off-road situations.

Six airbags are standard while the EX adds a driver's knee airbag. Total cargo volume is 2,765 litres.

Seating is 2/3/2, with the second and third rows with folding seats.

I heard one journalist comment he thought the styling was on the bland size. When it comes to SUVs and minivans, cargo and passenger room are key buying factors, ergo, boxy is good. You can have a swoopy roofline, but it makes for cramped quarters and minimal rear headroom like the BMW X6.

As I noted at the top, Kia is confident they have the right package for those still wavering on the cusp of deciding whether to buy or not to buy a big SUV.

For a seven-seat SUV the fuel consumption is nothing to some of the big V8s, but it can still tow 5,000 lbs in the V6 and 7,500 in the V8.

It is solidly built, adroit in urban, suburban and rural driving, is exceptionally well equipped and Kia tops it off with its 5-5-5 no quibble warranty.

So in an uncertain SUV market, it appears Kia may again have the power to surprise.

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