

## GEAR &amp; GADGETS

## DIVIDED, WE LISTEN

Kia's 'Quiet Mode' helps keep entertainment audio in the front and rear sections of the cabin from blending.



RUMBLE SEAT / DAN NEIL



## 2020 Kia Telluride: Functional For the Whole Family

**NO ONE IS QUITE** sure how it happened. Mistakes were made. An accident during the night seems to have caused an uncontrolled release of neurotoxins known to make people want to be parents. And now you are.

The 2020 Kia Telluride SUV, with optional seating for eight, is aimed at those who have been especially affected by outbreaks of whelping, weaning and child-rearing. While there are plenty of midsize, three-row family SUVs out there, the eight-seat option is a rarer thing. I count only five: Honda Pilot, Toyota Highlander, Chevy Traverse, the Kia, and its mechanical clone, the Hyundai Palisade. So, in addition to being named North American Utility of the Year this week by a jury of automotive media, the Telluride takes home the Breeders' Cup.

The Telluride/Palisade twins were designed and engineered specifically for North America, surely Hyundai Motor Group's biggest export market, at least in terms of body-mass index. Size has been privileged. The Telluride's boxy outside encloses an airy 178.1 cubic feet of interior space, with hip, shoulder and elbow room comparable to sitting alone in a ski gondola. The seats are broad, soft and shallowly bolstered at the hips, making entry and exit easy. Even with the third-row seat-backs up, the Telluride reserves 21 cubic

feet of cargo space, which is enough to carry a folded baby stroller, or one of those kneeler-wheelers, in case the gout is flaring up.

Even though they are built on opposite sides of the Earth—the Palisade in South Korea, the Telluride in Georgia, U.S.A.—the machines are virtually identical, down to millimeters. Both are propelled by a Singer-smooth, direct-injected 3.8-liter V6, paired with the same ghostly eight-speed transmission; both are built on the same platform/parts matrix (front-wheel or all-wheel drive) with the same strut-based front suspension and multi-link rear.

And both use the same AWD hardware and multi-mode traction mapping to go places. In Eco and Smart modes, 100% of torque drives the front wheels; in the default Comfort mode (and Snow mode), 20% is shipped to the rear axle; in Sport mode, up to 35%. If you really find yourself in the slush, there is an additional Lock mode, which splits torque 50/50, front and rear.

Motor Trend weighed top-spec versions of both SUVs and the results were within a pound of each other, 16 slim ounces. Now that is a triumph of global manufacturing.

At the helm: The Telluride's MacPherson strut front suspension and hydraulically assisted power steering give it a familiar carlike handle, light and direct, with confident line-

tracing at highway speeds, not too busy—more minivan than SUV. It will eat up highway miles and barely stir. The biggie 20-inch alloy wheels and tires—always a potential fail-point in terms of road noise and ride quality—were well hushed.

The Telluride's appetite for hot

laps is roughly equivalent to my children's love of morning calisthenics. It has nicely tuned anti-roll bars front and rear to reduce body roll in corners, which is fine if you are banking into a long curve. But if you need to jig left-right real quick for any reason, the Telluride's knees



2020 KIA TELLURIDE SX AWD

**Base Price** \$43,790

**Price, as Tested** \$46,860

**Engine and Drivetrain** Atkinson-cycle direct-injected 3.8-liter, DOHC 24-valve V6; eight-speed automatic transmission; on-demand all-wheel drive with low-traction modes

**Power/Torque** 291 hp at 6,000 rpm/262 lb-ft at 5,200 rpm

**Length/Width/Height/Wheelbase** 196.9/78.3/69.3 (inc. roof racks)/114.2 inches

**Curb Weight** 4,482 pounds

**0-60 mph** 7.2 seconds (Motor Trend)

**EPA Fuel Economy** 19/24/21 mpg, city/highway/combined

**Cargo Capacity** 21/46/86 cubic feet (behind 3rd/2nd/1st row seat backs)

lock. It's all about managing expectations, and you should expect anything as tall and dense as this (4,500 pounds, under 200 inches) to be as tossable as a Marshall double-stack.

**Acceleration:** With a well-placed kick the Telluride will lumber to 60 mph in 7.2 seconds, accompanied by the distant-sounding whir and gnash of the V6 and eight-speed auto. But it's like prodding an elephant into an elevator. This thing is so much happier turning lazy revs in double-overdrive.

Like the Palisade, the Telluride starts under \$32,000 and includes a long list of family-friendly nannying systems, including forward-collision

**Telluride's tech buffet includes Apple CarPlay, a cabin intercom and six USB ports—that should keep the spawn happy.**

warning/avoidance; rear-cross traffic and blind-spot collision avoidance; and distance-keeping cruise control with lane-following assistance. The tech buffet includes the standard 10.25-inch touch screen display (EX and SX trim), with navi; Android Auto and Apple CarPlay; the cabin intercom; and the so-called Quiet Mode, which keeps front passengers' entertainment choices from being heard in the rear seats. Also, six USB ports, five for charging and one for media. That should keep the spawn happy.

The SX trim adds the black-painted 20-inch alloy wheels, LED headlamps and the Harman Kardon surround sound. Our tester had been blessed with the upholstery upsell (Prestige Package, \$2,000), including stitched Nappa leather seat trim and head-up's instrument display.

Our tester priced out at \$46,860 and about the only option missing was the eight-seat configuration, due to the heated/ventilated second row captain's chairs.

You know what else the two machines have in common? Appalling, well-nigh unforgivable fuel economy (EPA-estimated 19/24/21 mpg, city/highway/combined). I was seeing trip averages in the high teens. The feds' estimate \$1,950 annual fuel costs (\$2.70 a gallon times 15,000 miles) seems entirely too rosy.

Many factors contribute to the Telluride's poor showing at the pump, including the usual suspects: curb weight and drag. The SX AWD with all the trimmings weighs 4,482 pounds; the shape has the aero slipperiness of a beer delivery truck.

And let's be clear: Kia isn't spending any new money on engine efficiency here. The Atkinson-cycle (non-turbo) V6 and eight-speed automatic are legacy bits, as developed as they are going to get. Kia can make a profit with this package in North America because fuel prices remain relatively moderate and regulatory pressures (i.e., compliance costs) are low.

Sure is a nice-looking truck, though, isn't it? Check out all the brightwork, the flush-fitting metal trim around the grille, around the window openings, at the rocker panel and bumper fascias. All seven of your kids will love it.



THAT'S DEBATABLE

### Is LinkedIn a Waste of Time?

It may fail as a fun social-media diversion, but career experts argue that it's still a great way to be discovered

**YES** THERE ARE OVER 673 million users on LinkedIn, but "most people have an account because they've been told they should or need to have one—then they never use it or update it," said Andrew Selepak, Ph.D., director of the graduate program in social media at University of Florida.

In recent years, LinkedIn has become a target of frustration in the social-media stratosphere: It's not fun or user-friendly, it's a bit ugly, and the site has become bogged down with spam connection requests and users' attempts to market products "versus building relationships, as it was intended for," said Lewis Goldstein, president of Blue Wind Marketing. "I get several messages a day from people who are trying to sell me something without even having a conversation."

The site can also encourage posturing. It's disingenuous to accept every request to connect and then brag about your vast business networks when those networks actually yield little activity and few interactions. "Most

people rarely have any professional content to share—we only change jobs so often or appear in national publications or earn new degrees," said Mr. Selepak. That's likely why users only spend about 17 minutes a month on LinkedIn compared with 35 minutes a day on Facebook, he added.

LinkedIn can be a great place to find email addresses or, if you're hiring, scour resumes with little effort, but people tend to let their profiles atrophy, said Mr. Selepak. Plus: There's always the risk they'll be notified you're stalking them on LinkedIn.

**NO** WHEN DR. BILL SCHINDLER first created a LinkedIn profile, he only did it so his students could tap his contacts and connections while hunting for internships and jobs. But while purging connection requests in 2015, the associate professor of Anthropology and Archaeology at Washington College in Chestertown, Md., came across a message from a casting director at the National Geographic network.

"I thought it was a joke, but decided to give her a call," he said. "Four months later I found myself on the African Savanna surrounded by

a film crew." The show, "The Great Human Race," debuted in February 2016.

His story may be rare, but at the very least, LinkedIn lets people connect with others in their industry; it's a living, digital resume you can send to potential employers and a tool used by recruiters to find better candidates. It's also a personal branding platform where you can distinguish yourself as a thought leader within your industry, said Aliza Licht, a digital consultant and author of "Leave Your Mark," a career guide for the social media era.

Having a profile isn't enough, though. "Being present on LinkedIn is essential," said Ms. Licht. You should regularly post content relevant to your career—innovations by your employer, job openings you've heard of, industry shifts you've observed—on its home-page feed as you would on Facebook. "It's a great way to get eyeballs on your point of view, your values and your accomplishments," she said, which raises the likelihood of making connections and finding opportunities. —Ashley Mateo