

Used Kia Sorento inspection checklist

What to check on a used Sorento, what a problem looks like, and when to walk away.



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COVERS **XM 2009–2015** **UM 2015–2020** **MQ4 2020 on**

☐ **Tick it if it's fine. Cross it if it isn't, and note what you found so you can price it into your offer.**

! Safety critical: affects how safely it drives or protects you in a crash. Best to have a mechanic check it before you buy.

\$ Negotiate: costs money to fix, from wear to major repairs. Get a quote and take it off the price.

0 Before you go

- ☐ **Get the VIN and rego** before you travel. A seller who won't share them is a red flag on its own.
- ☐ **Know what you're looking at:** petrol, diesel, hybrid or plug-in hybrid (PHEV); 2WD or AWD. Diesel, hybrid and AWD checks below are marked.
- ☐ **Ask how it was used:** family, towing a caravan or boat, dirt roads or short trips?
- ☐ **Ask for the engine to be cold,** go in daylight, and bring a torch, paper towel and a friend.

1 Exterior

- ☐ **Panels and paint.** Uneven gaps, mismatched colour or overspray on seals and trim mean crash repair. **\$**
- ☐ **Hail and dents.** Look along the roof, bonnet and tailgate at a low angle to the light. **\$**
- ☐ **Bumpers and wheels.** Parking scrapes and kerbed alloys. A badly kerbed wheel can be bent, causing vibration. **\$**
- ☐ **Lights, glass and sensors.** All lights work, no condensation inside; windscreen free of chips; sensors and cameras undamaged. **\$**
- ☐ **Tailgate** opens, shuts and locks cleanly; a power tailgate (if fitted) runs smoothly. **\$**
- ☐ **Towbar.** A worn tow ball means lots of towing; check the wiring plug works. **\$**
- ☐ **VIN plate** (in a door frame or under the bonnet) is there, untouched, and matches the papers.

2 Under the bonnet

- ☐ **Engine oil** between the dipstick marks, brown not black. Ask how often it's topped up between services. **\$**

- ☐ **Diesel: oil level** not above the top mark, and not smelling of diesel. A rising level usually comes from short trips interrupting the exhaust filter's self-clean. **\$**
- ☐ **Coolant** at the mark and brightly coloured. Rusty or oily coolant, or regular top-ups, needs a mechanic. **\$**
- ☐ **Brake fluid** (small tank at the back of the engine bay) is clear to light amber, not dark. **\$**
- ☐ **Belts, hoses and battery.** No cracked belts or swollen hoses. A weak 12V battery can stop a hybrid starting. **\$**
- ☐ **Leaks.** Wet oil on the engine or turbo pipes is a leak. **\$**
- ☐ **Cold start.** Starts easily and settles to a smooth idle. Knocking that speeds up with the revs needs a mechanic before you buy. **\$**

3 Underbody and wheels

- ☐ **Tyres** above the wear bars, worn evenly and under ~6 years old. AWD models need four matching tyres; mismatched ones strain the AWD system. **\$**
- ☐ **AWD:** no oil leaking from the rear axle or drive parts underneath. **\$**
- ☐ **Rust and crash repairs.** Rust on the floor or around the suspension; bent metal, fresh welds or new black coating in one spot. **!**
- ☐ **PHEV: underfloor battery.** Dents, scrapes or damage to the large flat battery case under the floor. **\$**
- ☐ **Scrapes and drips.** Dents underneath from dirt roads; drips where it's normally parked. **\$**
- ☐ **Suspension and brakes.** Oily shock absorbers, a sagging rear; deep grooves or a raised edge on the brake discs. **\$**
- ☐ **Diesel: exhaust.** Heavy black soot at the tailpipe can mean a damaged or removed exhaust filter (DPF). **\$**

! Stay safe. Never go under a car held up only by a jack, and never open the radiator or coolant cap on a hot engine. Keep hands, hair and loose clothing clear of fans and belts when the engine is running, and do checks under the bonnet with it switched off where you can. On the test drive, hold a current licence, confirm the car is registered and insured, obey road rules, and only brake hard when the road behind is clear. Meet in a safe, public-facing place, take someone with you, and don't carry large amounts of cash to a viewing.

4 Interior and electrics

- ☐ **Warning lights.** Key to "on": every dash light comes on, then goes out once running. An airbag, brake, engine or hybrid warning that stays on needs explaining.

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- ☐ **Every seatbelt** (up to seven) pulls out fully, retracts and latches, with no fraying.

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- ☐ **Seats.** Middle row slides and folds; third row folds and locks. Stains, tears and broken latches show a hard family life.

\$
- ☐ **PHEV: electric range.** Fully charged, note the range shown. A range well below what it had new can mean a worn battery.

\$
- ☐ **Air con** blows cold front and rear, without a musty smell; heater gets hot.

\$
- ☐ **Electrics.** Screens, Bluetooth/CarPlay, cameras, sensors, windows and sunroof. Count the keys.

\$

5 Test drive

- ☐ **Automatic.** Smooth changes with no slipping, shudder or thump into Drive or Reverse. Towing wears autos; ask when the fluid was changed.

\$
- ☐ **Hybrid or PHEV.** Moves off smoothly on electric power, and the engine joins in with no surges, cut-outs or warnings.

\$
- ☐ **Engine.** Pulls strongly with no stutter, flat spots or smoke. Diesel: ask how often the exhaust filter light has come on.

\$

- ☐ **Brakes.** Firm pedal; stops straight with no pulling, pulsing or grinding.

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- ☐ **Steering and suspension.** Drives straight; no knocks over bumps or clunks through the wheel.

\$
- ☐ **Noises.** A hum that grows with speed (wheel bearing), or a whine from the rear (AWD).

\$
- ☐ **Afterwards,** check for new drips, a steady temperature gauge and no hot smells.

\$

6 Documentation

- ☐ **Seller's ID** matches the rego papers, and the VIN matches on the papers and VIN plate.
- ☐ **Service history.** Logbook stamped on time, with receipts. Heavy towing should mean extra gearbox and AWD servicing.

\$
- ☐ **Engine work.** Ask whether the engine has ever been replaced or repaired under warranty, and get the paperwork.

\$
- ☐ **PHEV: charging gear.** The portable charging cable is included and works.

\$
- ☐ **Warranty.** A newer Sorento may still be under Kia's new-car warranty. Check the start date and that servicing kept it valid.
- ☐ **Rego and roadworthy.** Rego checked online; roadworthy supplied if your state requires one on sale.

\$

What this guide can't tell you about the Sorento you're looking at

17+

recalls on Sorentos built since 2009*

25

common faults reported on Sorentos built since 2009*

11,901

owner complaints on Sorentos built since 2011*

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* Shufti analysis, October 2026, of official recall notices, complaints lodged by vehicle owners with vehicle safety regulators, and independent reviews and owner forums. Faults are counted when two or more independent sources report them.

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