

Hyundai Santa Fe R2.2 Elite AWD: It's all you need, really

 By [Alan Duggan](#)

20 Aug 2021

I knew very little about this Hyundai SUV when I took delivery of the upper-end Elite model for a week-long test. I had seen pictures of the oversized "cascading" grille - in the event of the apocalypse, it will doubtless come in useful for braaing a whole sheep - and imposing proportions, but nothing had prepared me for the surprising power of its four-cylinder turbodiesel engine.



Image credit: Alan Duggan

With a capacity of just 2.2ls, it delivers 148kW of power at 3,800r/min and an equally impressive 440Nm of torque between 1,750 and 2,750r/min. In everyday terms, this allows the fully loaded Santa Fe to overtake traffic and soar up a mountain passe with an alacrity that belies the vehicle's formidable size and weight, the dual-clutch eight-speed automatic transmission switching cogs with nary a pause - either by itself or via the steering wheel-mounted paddle shift. In short, I'm impressed with the machinery that makes it go.

In essence, this is a thoroughly facelifted and markedly improved version of the previous model, which has been around for a few years and was pretty good to start with, albeit trailing a few competitors in terms of onboard comfort and convenience features. But that's all in the past: the Santa Fe Elite has it all, with knobs on.

Pampered by electronics

Okay, let's get into the nitty-gritty. For starters, there's the eight-inch touchscreen infotainment system, compatible with Android Auto and Apple CarPlay, and a large digital instrument display that looks really cool. The centre console provides access to the basic stop-or-go buttons - Drive, Neutral, Reverse, Park, automatic dual-control aircon and other comfort features as well as a dial for selecting the most appropriate driving mode for the road conditions - or your mood, come to think of it - Smart, Sand, Sport, Eco, Mud, Comfort and Snow.

If you can't make up your mind, select Smart and let the computer make the choice. I tried five of the seven options: sadly, mud and snow were not available when I needed them for my review. If you enjoy being pampered by electronics, this is the way to go.



Image credit: Alan Duggan



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If you like, you can use the key fob to start the vehicle remotely and adjust the cabin temperature to your desired comfort level, but for the life of me, I cannot imagine anyone other than a certified wimp or shameless show-off actually doing this. The ventilated, leather-trimmed seats are electrically adjustable in front and the cabin is equipped with lots of airbags: six in all, including curtain bags for extra side-impact protection. Oh, and there's a panoramic sunroof that delivers a feeling of open-air excitement while offering a useful - if illegal - opportunity for teenagers to stand on the seat and shout at pedestrians.

Just steer and hit the gas

Driver assistance technologies include antilock brakes with EBD (Electronic Brakeforce Distribution, which automatically regulates the amount of braking force applied to each wheel), brake assist, downhill brake control, reverse parking collision assist, hill start assist, blind-spot monitoring and rear cross-traffic assist. A rear-mounted camera with dynamic guidelines provides an excellent view of what's behind you as you back into that parking space. Basically, all you need to do is steer and hit the gas pedal. I found the "smart" remote-controlled, powered tailgate very useful for school pick-ups and airport runs.

Interior space is generous to a fault, with passenger comfort and legroom to match, and the vehicle makes long journeys a pleasure. Front seating is cockpit-style, so don't even think about changing drivers without exiting the vehicle.

Unless you know where to look, you'd be tempted to think of the Santa Fe as a five-seater because the two folding seats in the third row are hidden beneath the absolutely flat floor. Okay, the rearmost passengers will need to sit with their knees at chin level, but it's still a nice-to-have. With the third row folded down, you get 1,032ls of luggage capacity, and with both rows flattened, the space becomes downright cavernous at 2,041ls.



Image credit: Alan Duggan

Naturally, the Santa Fe has a few competitors. Among them is the best-selling Toyota Fortuner (costing a lot less and admittedly a very different kind of SUV), the Land Rover Discovery Sport and perhaps the Ford Everest. If this is your kind of vehicle and the price sounds about right, do the right thing and drive them all before signing anything. You might also consider Hyundai's newly introduced Palisade R2.2 Elite, the all-wheel-drive flagship that comes in 7- or 8-seater configuration and gives you R100 change from a million bucks.

Hyundai Santa Fe Elite: Just the facts

- Engine: R2.2 CRDi four-cylinder turbodiesel
- Power: 148kW at 3,800r/min
- Torque: 440Nm between 1,750 and 2,750r/min
- Transmission: Eight-speed DCT automatic, full-time AWD
Maximum speed: 205km/h
- Acceleration: 0-100km/h in 9.2 seconds
- Claimed fuel consumption: 7.9ls/100km (combined cycle)
- Pricing: Santa Fe R2.2 Executive – R769,500, Santa Fe R2.2 Elite – R869,500

ABOUT ALAN DUGGAN

Alan Duggan was the founding editor of *Popular Mechanics* in South Africa and is a former motoring correspondent for the *Sunday Times* and other publications.

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