

KIA AMERICA NEWS

**A NEW WAY TO ROLL: KICKING OFF A CELEBRATION OF THE KIA SOUL**

* **Set to retire at the conclusion of the 2025 model year, over 1.5 million Kia Souls have been sold in the U.S. since 2009**
* **The Kia Soul’s ongoing popularity and influence on pop culture was fueled by some of the most memorable and effective automotive advertising in the history of the automotive industry**

**Irvine, CA, October 6, 2025** – From a humble beginning as a boxy concept vehicle in Kia’s U.S. design studio and continuing through 16 years of passion, the fun and funky Kia Soul urban runabout has always stood out from the crowd. As what most consider the first production vehicle in Kia’s design-led and historic transformation, the Soul has attracted new customers to the brand by projecting the kind of individuality and optimism that appeals to both the young and the young-at-heart. And with Kia’s overall U.S. sales nearly tripling during the Soul’s lifetime, its impact simply cannot be overstated.

“The Soul was one of the cornerstones in Kia gaining a foothold in the United States and this one-of-a-kind vehicle – and the marketing supporting it – helped Kia move to where it resides today,” said Eric Watson, Vice President, Sales, Kia America. “Kia is steadily progressing towards its third consecutive annual sales record and all-time high market share, and that is possible thanks to the early success carved out by the Soul. We are proud of the legacy Soul will leave behind as it exits our lineup, but equally excited for the future of Kia’s expansive and award-winning utility vehicle lineup.”

**“BOAR WITH A BACKPACK”**

In the mid-2000s, Kia set out to design a global car that stood out from the status quo of compact hatchbacks. SUVs were continuing their climb towards market dominance at the time, and so it was decided that this new vehicle would combine the nimble efficiency of a small car with the versatility and proportions of an SUV. While watching a nature documentary on the life of wild boars, the team at Kia Design Center America was inspired by the idea of a “boar wearing a backpack” given this animal’s strength and attitude relative to its size and translated that idea into a mechanical form. All too often, during the transition from concept to production, a vehicle loses some of its celebrated spirit and edge. Not so for the Soul, as the 2006 production model was incredibly true to the original concept.

**MUSIC-LOVING HAM-STARS**

Introduced with the tagline “A New Way to Roll,” the highly customizable Soul offered an audio system that featured in-speaker lighting to help illuminate the beat. As an automaker looking to make a mark by launching a clearly different type of compact vehicle, Kia needed a marketing campaign that made a similar and strong impact. Enter a cast of hamsters with ears for hip music and paws on the pulse of pop culture.

Tapping into the power of music, dance, and positivity, the “Ham-stars” cruised to playlists ranging from Black Sheep’s classic hip-hop track "The Choice Is Yours," LMFAO's smash hit "Party Rock Anthem,” to Motörhead’s “Ace of Spades.” The hamsters quickly became advertising legends, with the Madison Avenue Advertising Walk of Fame naming them the first-ever "Rookie of the Year.”

**INSPIRING NEW IDEAS**

Kia took the wraps off a number of Soul-based concept vehicles through the years including the 2009 Soul’ster, an unexpected pickup/utility variant of the Soul. Another standout concept was the 2012 Track’ster with its turbocharged 250-horsepower engine, two-doors, and AWD system that took the idea of “hot hatch” to another level. The Track’ster featured a number of design cues that would make their way into the second-generation Soul in 2014.

Track gave way to trail at the Chicago Auto Show in 2015, with the debut of the Trail’ster concept. A more rugged interpretation of the Soul, it featured an e-AWD system to put ample power to all four wheels. Thanks to the Soul’s overall popularity, customer demand for new variations continued to grow so a more potent powertrain debuted in the Soul Turbo in 2017. While all-wheel drive would not be offered in the Soul, demand for an all-wheel-drive Kia subcompact SUV led to the development of the Kia Seltos. More than just AWD, the Seltos is an evolution of the Kia CUV that offers more cargo room behind the rear seats and increased ground clearance than the Soul. The Seltos also offers a spirited turbocharged engine and helpful Kia ADAS features.

Throughout its life, the Soul was often at the core of Kia’s many memorable SEMA Show displays, with customized creations ranging from a mobile DJ booth and rolling music memorabilia museum to an all-electric reimagining of a classic ice cream truck.

**AN INCREDIBLE SUCCESS STORY**

In 2018, Kia announced that more than one million Souls had been purchased by passionate owners ahead of the introduction of the third-and-final generation, which debuted in 2019 as a 2020 model. This gen-3 Soul was more refined than ever yet clearly also embraced the fun and funky spirit that made this machine such a sales success throughout the years. In fact, while the Soul was often marketed towards younger buyers, it also attracted an older demographic that Kia quickly realized were often people of the same spirit…just separated by age.

**A CHAPTER CLOSES**

The Soul is expected to end production in October, and with just a few thousand units remaining at dealers around the US. These are the last examples of Kia’s spirited runabout with a big personality, everyday functionality and efficiency.

**Awards and Accolades:**

**2009 “Best Bet” Distinction by The Car Book
2009 Ward’s AutoWorld “Interior of the Year” list — “Grooviest Interior”
2009 Kelley Blue Book “Coolest New Cars Under $18,000”
2009 Kelley Blue Book “Top 10 Back-to-School Cars”
2009 Red Dot Design Award (Product Design)
2010 Cars.com “Best Hatchback of 2010”
2010 TIME “Most Exciting Cars of 2010”
2010 Popular Mechanics Automotive Excellence Award
2010 IIHS Top Safety Pick
2011 Effie Awards — Gold Effie (North America) for Soul hamster campaign (“This or That”)
2011 Nielsen Automotive Advertising Awards — Automotive Ad of the Year (Hamsters)
2012 J.D. Power Initial Quality Study — Highest Ranked in Segment
2012 Kelley Blue Book — “Top 10 Back-to-School Cars” (No. 1)
2012 Kelley Blue Book — “Top 10 Tailgating Cars”
2013 J.D. Power Initial Quality Study — Segment leader (repeat)
2013 Kelley Blue Book — “10 Coolest Cars Under $18,000”
2014 WardsAuto “10 Best Interiors”
2014 Red Dot Design Award (Product Design)
2014 iF Product Design Award
2014 International Design Excellence Awards (IDEA) — Bronze (Transportation)
2014 Clio Awards — Silver (Music: Partnerships/Collaborations) “Totally Transformed”
2015 Red Dot Design Award — Soul EV
2015 GOOD DESIGN Award — Soul EV
2017 IIHS Top Safety Pick+ (with specific headlights & optional front crash prevention)
2017 U.S. News & World Report — “Best Cars for the Money” (Compact Car)
2017 Parents Magazine & Edmunds — Best Family Cars (“Best Budget Vehicle”)
2018 (2019 MY) Consumer Guide Automotive — Best Buy
2019 Kelley Blue Book — 5-Year Cost to Own Award (Compact Car)
2019 Kelley Blue Book — “10 Coolest New Cars Under $20,000” (No. 1)
2019 Kelley Blue Book — “10 Best Back-to-School Cars”
2020 World Car Awards — World Urban Car (Soul EV)
2021 IIHS Top Safety Pick (with specific headlights/optioned AEB)
2022 IIHS Top Safety Pick (with options)
2023 Kelley Blue Book — Best Cars for College Students (New Cars Under $25,000)**

**Kia America – about us**

*Headquartered in Irvine, California, Kia America continues to top automotive quality surveys. Kia is recognized as one of the TIME World's Most Sustainable Companies of 2024. Kia serves as the "Official Automotive Partner" of the NBA and WNBA and offers a range of gasoline, hybrid, plug-in hybrid, and electric vehicles sold through a network of nearly 800 dealers in the U.S., including several cars and SUVs proudly assembled in America\*.*

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*\* Select trims of the 2025 all-electric EV6 and EV9 all-electric three-row SUV, Sportage (excludes HEV and PHEV models), Sorento (excludes HEV and PHEV models), and Telluride are assembled in the United States from U.S. and globally sourced parts.*

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