

New updates to global success story

In 2019, Kia Motors made a number of improvements to the Niro, its best-selling electrified crossover range of ultra-low emission vehicles. The upgraded Hybrid and Plug-in Hybrid models made their global debut on 5 March 2019 at the Geneva International Motor Show. The Niro, which combines crossover style practicality with ultra-low hybrid emissions, has been enhanced with a new exterior design, a more upscale and high-quality interior. The Hybrid and Plug-in Hybrid models also feature Kia's advanced new UVO CONNECT telematics system, which brings additional 'connected' functionality to the car. Maaïke Aarts, Manager Communications & PR at Kia, and Jurgen Trompert, Product manager Niro Family in the Netherlands, explain what makes the Niro exceedingly popular, and how the car exemplifies Kia's hybrid and EV ambitions.

Kia Motors Corporation was founded in May 1944 and is Korea's oldest manufacturer of motor vehicles. From humble origins making bicycles and motorcycles, Kia has grown – as part of the dynamic, global Hyundai-Kia Automotive Group – to become the world's fifth largest vehicle manufacturer. Today, Kia produces more than 1.4 million vehicles a year at 14 manufacturing and assembly operations in eight countries. These vehicles are

sold and serviced through a network of more than 3,000 distributors and dealers covering 172 countries. The Corporation has more than 40,000 employees and annual revenues of more than US\$17 billion.

The Niro is a global success story for Kia around the world, and particularly in Europe. Since sales began in 2016, over 270,000 units of the Niro have been sold globally, with more than 100,000 units sold on the old continent. The Niro

crossover was Kia's fifth best-selling model in Europe in 2018, with sales growing 33% to 45,255 units – including 34,642 hybrids and 9,951 plug-in hybrids. The Niro range expanded at the end of 2018 with the launch of the full-electric e-Niro.

The car has been winning awards left and right and it's also a success in the Netherlands, say Maaïke Aarts, Manager Communications & PR at Kia, and Jurgen Trompert, Product manager Niro Family.

"The Niro Hybrid has become one of our best sold models in The Netherlands. It has been the number one hybrid in the market for the past three years and supports our ambition to become one of the market leaders in low-emission vehicles. The hybrid segment within the total market is YTD 2019 8%, of which Kia Niro takes 17% market share. The Niro Family as a whole represents a very important role in terms of volume and ambition for Kia. The full electric e-Niro





was introduced end of 2018 and since then has been one of the most sold EV's in The Netherlands.”

What makes the Niro Hybrid unique when compared to other hybrid cars, according to Aarts and Trompert, is that it is equipped with a DCT6 instead of a CVT transmission. “This offers a more comfortable driving experience, with a sporty character merged with efficient fuel consumption. The crossover design offers a spacious interior.”

While it's difficult to improve on a vehicle that's doing so well, the automaker continues to introduce updates to the Kia Niro. There are quite a few enhancements on the exterior of the latest generation Niro, which was introduced at the Geneva Auto Show in March 2019. The refreshed design aligns the Hybrid and Plug-in Hybrid variants of the range with the appearance of the new all-electric e-Niro.

While the Niro retains its distinctive design and iconic 'tiger-nose' grille, new bumpers at the front and rear give it a more purposeful appearance and more confident stance on the road. The standard projection headlamps have been redesigned while buyers can specify optional full LED headlamps. The bumper features new LED daytime

running lights below the headlamps with a unique double-arrow layout, as well as optional LED fog lamps.

At the rear of the car, newly-redesigned LED lights give the Niro a more distinctive and modern light signature. The new bumper design is finished with a silver-painted skid plate and incorporates new light reflectors and rear fog lamps in the corners. The Niro Hybrid now provides more customisation options to buyers, offered with a choice of two 16-inch alloy wheel designs, as well as an all-new 18-inch dual-tone diamond-cut alloy wheel. The Niro Plug-in Hybrid is available with newly-designed 16-inch alloy wheels with dark grey inserts, contributing to its unique stance and design.

Aarts and Trompert emphasise that the new Niro features UVO connect, their revolutionary infotainment system which includes the Kia Live function, which shows relevant and detailed information on the navigation screen in the dashboard. Kia owners only need to activate it once, then Kia Live retrieves all info and updates via the SIM card in the infotainment system. In addition, the UVO app now directly connects to the Kia, with one tap on the

smartphone. This gives Kia drivers direct insight into all the most important information and functions of their car, including all sorts of useful numbers and statistics. Through the app, a number of functions can be controlled remotely, notably the ability to heat or cool the interior and schedule battery charging sessions remotely from any location on the full-electric e-Niro.

The target group for the new Niro Hybrid is pretty diverse, according to Aarts and Trompert. It included business and private drivers, families, and the eco-conscious minded. “We see growth in private lease sales due to the unique combination of low fixed monthly costs together with lower fuel costs due to hybrid technology.”



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