

Hyundai Santa Fe in India - First Drive, Review, Price & Photos

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As we were driving down the ghat we spotted a beefy, silvery beast speeding ahead of us. Most of the things that are fast and have wheels do grab our attention instantly. As we closed in, I exclaimed, "Hey, wait a minute. Is it... is it the Santa Fe?" Much to our surprise, it was the much-anticipated SUV from Hyundai that the Korean automobile maker had been testing secretly for homologation in Pune. When we caught up with them, the executives were kind enough to give us a quick spin in the yet-to-be-launched SUV. Just enough for us to form a first impression of the vehicle.

Hyundai Santa Fe in India



The new **Hyundai SUV** is named after the city of **Santa Fe** in New Mexico and literally means 'holy faith' in Spanish. The mid-size soft-roader is based on the Hyundai Sonata platform. It will be imported into India as a completely built unit (CBU) and will be positioned between the compact SUV Tucson and the bigger Terracan, both of which have now been discontinued. The 2010 Santa Fe has recently gone through a mid-life makeover and I feel it definitely has better road presence than its forebears, namely, the Tucson and Terracan. Unfortunately, neither of them could rock the boat in India. The Santa Fe, on the other hand, seems far better equipped to tackle competition.

Hyundai Santa Fe - Design

The body-coloured front grille is embellished by a chrome rim and has horizontal grids along with vertical ones that reminded me of a trident. The slightly arched front headlights blend with the curving, soft lines of the Santa Fe. The high ground clearance and matt silver roof rails add to the sporty design cue without being intimidating. The five-split spoke alloy wheels look really neat and add glamour to the SUV's side profile. The all-red tail-lights with an overdose of chrome outlay are also arched to compliment the headlight design. Overall, the soft-roader is designed to look sturdy and solid without being overbearing.

Interiors

The Santa Fe can seat seven adults thanks to its third-row bench. Its interior carries a combination of black and beige with artificial ebony wood and matt chrome trims, which seem to be been inspired by BMW design. However, the plastic quality of the Santa Fe makes it look like a poor cousin of the German car. Hyundai has a decent equipment list with power windows, keyless entry, a-c, CD/MP3 player, anti-lock braking system (ABS), electronic stability control and side airbags (dual front, front side and side curtain), automatic headlights, leather seats, dual-zone surround automatic climate control, Bluetooth hands-free phone connectivity and steering wheel audio controls as standard in the new Santa Fe. The SUV we got our hands on did not have touch-screen navigation system, rear back-up camera or even park assist.

Hyundai Santa Fe - Engine

The Santa Fe will be a four-wheel drive SUV powered by a 2.2 litre, CRDI (common rail direct injection) engine mated with six-speed manual transmission. The mill can produce an impressive 197 PS at 3,800 rpm and 422 Nm at 1,800-2,500 rpm. We expect Hyundai to introduce a six-speed automatic transmission also as this variant is already available in the international market.

Drive and Ride

Since the torque kicks in at such low rpm, the Korean SUV feels spirited and on its toes at all times. I could not detect any turbo lag or sluggishness. The Santa Fe squeezes out the most of the 2.2-litre mill and doesn't mind being revved up until the red line. The suspension felt a bit rubbery and bouncy when taken for pure off-roading. Having said that, I feel that the soft-roader will be living most of its life taking young entrepreneurs from their cosy homes to swanky offices and will rarely see broken road in its lifetime. So a softer suspension setting seems to be a sensible option chosen by the Korean carmaker. The front suspension is a McPherson strut with coil spring and the rear suspension is a multi link type with anti-roll stabiliser bar.

Santa Fe has a decent ground clearance and we can vouch for that, because we did hit a few ditches a couple of times, and a flying Santa Fe (above) seems to drive home the point.

Conclusion

The Hyundai Santa Fe is a very safe car, equipped as it is with several active and passive safety features. It promises a five-star ANCAP safety rating, several air-bags and peace of mind. Since Hyundai will be importing the Santa Fe as a CBU, we reckon it to be priced around Rs 20 lakh, bang-on against the Chevrolet Captiva, Ford Endeavour and Toyota Fortuner.

Now that the Korean auto major has bestowed their 'holy faith' on the Santa Fe, we have to wait and watch how they price and position their latest SUV to complete their Indian model line-up.

Hyundai Santa Fe Price in India

Rs. 20 lakh (approx)

Hyundai Santa Fe - Photo Gallery



Specifications

Engine 2199cc, 197PS, 422 Nm

Transmission: Six-speed manual, four-wheel drive

Performance: NA

Fuel efficiency: NA

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