Kia EV3, EV4 concepts look like the future, will soon be a reality

Enlarge / Around the world people are asking for smaller electric vehicles. Someone at Kia has been listening and designed this car, the EV3.

reader comments

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Kia provided flights from Los Angeles to Seoul and three nights in a hotel so we could see the EV3, EV4, and EV5. Ars does not accept paid editorial content.

Kia is staring down an ambitious goal. The company wants to increase its global electric vehicle sales to 1 million units annually by 2026, further ramping up to 1.6 million by 2030. New products like the EV5 crossover and EV9 SUV will certainly help with this push, but smaller, more affordable EVs will be crucial to Kia's success, as well. That's why, despite being called concept cars, the new EV3 and EV4 are thinly veiled glimpses into Kia's next round of production EVs.

Unveiled at Kia's EV Day event in South Korea this week, the EV3 and EV4 will arrive in the next few years. The company also spoke about an even smaller EV2 that will be designed for Europe and emerging markets, with the goal for that car being a super-low starting price—something around the equivalent of $30,000.

Enlarge / There’s a strong family resemblance between the EV3, EV5, and EV9.

The EV3 and EV4 ride on the same E-GMP electric vehicle architecture that underpins the Kia EV6 and EV9, as well as sister vehicles like the Hyundai Ioniq 5, Ioniq 6, and Genesis GV60. However, while the current crop of E-GMP vehicles are built with 800 V electrical architecture giving them fast charging speeds, the EV3 and EV4 will use a slightly more cost-effective version of this platform with a 400 V system. That’s a bummer; one of the big highlights of cars like the Kia EV6 is its ability to charge at a max rate of 233 kW. With the EV3 and EV4, we could be looking at a maximum rate of 150 kW—or less.

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Kia declined to give further powertrain details, but we can

expect the EV3 and EV4 will be offered in both single- and dual-motor configurations. An official decision about whether or not these cars will come to the US is still TBD, but should they arrive Stateside, Kia says they'll come with a combo charger that includes Tesla's North American Charging Standard plug, giving the EV3 and EV4 access to the excellent Supercharger network.

Enlarge / The EV3 interior.

The EV3 is definitely the cuter of the bunch—all blocky, like a mini-me version of the EV9. Its small SUV form factor will definitely make it popular around the world, with vehicles like the new Volvo EX30 squarely in this EV's sights. We absolutely hope those four-spoke blocky wheels come to production, too.

Inside, the EV3 has a few trick features, including a slide-out panel for the climate controls and backlit pieces of trim that are movable, directing airflow from the fixed vents. Most significantly, the EV3 has a flip-up rear bench seat that would allow customers to make use of the flat load floor. Kia even says it's hoping to fit the EV3 with an interior vehicle-to-load (V2L) outlet, so you could, say, carry an e-bike and charge it while you drive. That's not just conceptual thinking, either—Kia is looking to put this into production.

The EV4, meanwhile, is a bit weirder to behold. It's not quite a sedan, not quite a swoopy four-door coupe, and definitely not a wagon, yet it incorporates attributes of all three. Kia's global design lead, Karim Habib, said the goal was to "shift the paradigm of sedan typology." The carmaker knows sedans aren't quite the hot-ticket items they used to be, but Kia is still very much committed to this body style—or a reinterpretation of it, anyway.

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- The EV4's longtail is certainly distinctive.
- The front aspect of the EV4 is more or less avant-garde.
- The EV4 interior.

Kia uses words like "longtail" to describe the EV4's rear end—a term commonly reserved for insane supercars or low-drag Le Mans specials. But in profile, we can kind of see it. The sloping roofline terminates with a double-bubble aero bit ahead of the rear glass, which extends way out to the decklid, where there's an integrated ducktail spoiler. The EV4's rear overhang is decidedly huge, but the carmaker says this equates to voluminous cargo space. Kia couldn't open the concept car's rear hatch for us but says it's like a liftback sedan—think Kia Stinger—where the back glass opens with the trunk.

Moving inside the EV4, you'll find many of the same elements as the EV3, including directional air vents, slide-out climate screen, and a movable center console table that allows you to

lock it into several different positions. The rear-hinged back coach doors won’t make it to production, though, with Habib saying Kia puts these on all its concept cars to make the cabin easier to see.

It’s unclear exactly when the EV3 and EV4 will go into production, and full disclosure: Kia hasn’t officially confirmed them for sale in the US, either. That said, if the company wants to boost its EV sales in the very near future, it must act soon. We bet the EV3 and EV4 will be on the road before you know it. Hopefully, the final cars look just as cool.

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