



## QUICK FACTS

Price Rs 24.97 lakh  
(ex-showroom, Delhi)  
On sale Now

## KOLE CALLING

Renault's revamped premium SUV gets more power and an auto 'box. And it's now very close to the Germans' territory.

## FIRST VERDICT

Thoroughly updated and improved in every way.



## SO GOOD

- Loaded with equipment
- Exceptional ride

## NO GOOD

- Turbo lag and lethargic gearbox
- Limited knee room in the back

ANOTHER CAR RENAULT is trying to revive is the Koleos SUV. This updated Koleos can be bought with either a manual gearbox in 4X2 or 4x4 guise or with automatic transmission with 4X4, and this is the variant we've driven here. As for the mechanicals, Renault has stuck to a more conventional six-speed torque converter.

The cabin quality and tactility of materials is great and the thoughtfully laid out dashboard is a blend of plain surfaces (with soft-touch plastics) and clusters of buttons around the lower half. The

switches have a nice, damped feel to them and feel befitting of the price tag. In terms of comfort, the leather-upholstered front seats offer a nice blend of comfort and support; both of them are electrically adjustable and it's easy to find a nice driving position. The rear bench is comfy too, with a reclining seat back, good thigh support and enough room for three. However, the knee room isn't great and feels cramped, especially for an SUV of this footprint.

Renault has handsomely kitted this SUV too. Our top-spec test car was equipped with a fantastic sounding 8-speaker Bose audio system with Bluetooth and iPod connectivity. Apart from this, there's dual-zone climate control, powered driver's seat, rear parking sensors, cruise control, button start and electrically heated wing mirrors too. With 6 airbags, ABS, EBD and ESP, safety isn't compromised on either.

Since there's no third row, you get 450 litres of boot space with the seats up. Additionally, the 60/40 splitting seats help store huge amounts of luggage. There are quite a few cubby holes too, with two of them hidden under the rear passenger's feet!

One of the few criticisms we had with the manual Koleos was that the huge turbo-lag that made the SUV very lethargic below 2,000rpm. Unfortunately, this auto 'box lacks a sense of urgency and at low revs, magnifies the arthritic nature of the 2.0-litre diesel. This means, the Koleos automatic isn't at its best in stop and go traffic. And since the auto 'box would appeal to urban consumers, it would spend most of its time in an environment that exposes its weakness. However, the gearbox does respond better when left in manual mode and though it isn't very swift to react to requests, it's more predictable.

To really exploit the Koleos' 170 horses, you need to head to the open roads as this is where the engine feels its best. Cruising at around 100kph plants the engine in the meat of the powerband and here, the SUV responds well to part throttle inputs. Overtaking at high speeds is quite effortless too. In terms of refinement, the well-insulated cabin keeps the diesel clatter at bay but, some vibrations filter through and can be felt on the primary controls.

Where the Koleos truly impresses

is the way it flattens undulations. The ride is very absorbent and makes easy work of broken tarmac, irrespective of its speed. The suspension also keeps thuds in check and only very large potholes manage to ruffle the Koleos' composure. The overall stability at speed is impressive, and the accurate steering wheel drills confidence in the driver. Tackling the infamous 36-hairpin ghat to Ooty, the SUV demonstrated good body control too.

So is it worth it? The Koleos shines in terms of build quality, ride and equipment levels. It's a great highway cruiser too. But, its dull bottom-end means it isn't its best in an urban environment where it will invariably spend most of its life.

Also, with a price tag of Rs 24.97 lakh for the 4X4 automatic, the Koleos lands uncomfortably close to the Audi Q3 and BMW X1. While the top-spec Koleos is well equipped and can easily give the entry level German SUV's a run for their money, it lacks their badge value.

## ADITYA BENGALI

## RENAULT KOLEOS 4X4 AT

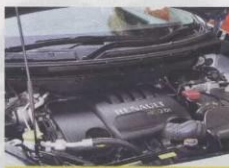
Price	Rs 24.97 lakh (ex-showroom, Delhi)
L/W/H	4520/1855/1705mm
Wheelbase	2690mm
Engine	4 cyls, 1995cc, turbo-diesel
Layout	Front, transverse
Power	171bhp at 3750rpm
Torque	36.71kgm at 2000rpm
Gearbox	6-speed automatic
Tyre size	225/60 R17
Kerb weight	1794kg
Fuel tank capacity	65 litres
Boot capacity	450 litres



Gearbox slow by current benchmarks.



Top-spec gets fantastic Bose audio.



Motor feels at home on the highway.