

2000 NISSAN XTERRA

The Xterra is a compact 4X4 sport-utility vehicle from Nissan intended as the vehicle of choice for outdoorsy types who cycle, kayak, camp, etc. Shorter than the Pathfinder, with a shorter wheelbase, it shares several of the Frontier's components. An automatic transmission is the only available option.

Interior and cargo area

Like other 4X4 vehicles, the Xterra is a high step up, and you have to be careful not to get your clothes dirty on the running boards on the way in and out. The front buckets are very comfortable, even on long trips. Short people may find that the seat cushion is a bit too long, and unless you are of above-average height, you'll probably be seated too low and won't be able to see over the hood.

Narrow rear doors further hamper access. The bench is a bit higher than the front seats and though the outboard positions are very comfortable, the middle section is barely acceptable. The seat back folds 45 degrees, and by removing the seat cushion, which is easy to do, the seat can be folded flat to the floor.

The cargo area is roomy even with the 60/40 split bench in place. A relatively high liftover makes loading the trunk a bit more difficult. A first-aid kit is fitted into the rear hatch, which opens high and out of the way.

Safety and convenience

The interior is quiet, except in heavy acceleration, and at highway speeds, when the wind whistles around the roof rack. The combination luggage/roof rack can accept weights of 13.6 kg and 57 kg respectively. The Xterra offers a higher level of fit and finish than many cars.

Nissan has thoughtfully provided lots of storage compartments plus five cup holders that adjust to accommodate a variety of beverage containers. The radio should be located above, not below, the ventilation controls.

The Xterra has a panoply of accessories to gear it to specific tasks, including waterproof seat covers, bicycle, ski, snowboard and surfboard racks, and more.

Safetywise, the Xterra comes with dual air bags, big outside mirrors, locking head restraints and anti-lock brakes. The windshield wipers do not have an intermittent cycle, however, and the underpowered headlamps leave about a two-metre zone in darkness, just in front of the vehicle. Rear visibility is diminished by the rear bench's integrated head restraints and by the height of the rear window frame. Drivers of average height or less have to compose with big blind zones on both sides of the vehicle.

Engine and transmission

In normal driving, with no load and two people on board, the V-6 engine (the only engine available) provides very adequate power and good low-end torque. However, passing is laborious,

especially at highway speeds, and with a heavy load, performance leaves much to be desired. Drivers have to tramp the accelerator, and fuel economy suffers: the Xterra uses more gas than many other, bigger sport-utes equipped with more powerful engines.

The well-gearred manual transmission has a progressive clutch and is easy to shift though some members of our test team said that the gearshift lever was too long. The manual transmission allows the driver to make better use of engine capacity. The front wheels can be engaged in the 4H position up to 40 km/h according to the builder, but the system gets a bit balky at speeds above 20 km/h.

On the road

The Xterra delivers a surprisingly smooth ride on practically all types of roads. The suspension easily absorbs most rough patches and only the rare section actually succeeds in making the wheels bounce, especially when the vehicle is loaded. Though Xterra was not designed to shine in a slalom contest, it corners well with relatively little lean.

The well-tuned steering is precise and reasonably quick with a short turning circle for a 4X4. Braking is satisfactory in all situations.

On the lift at the CAA-Quebec inspection centre, the Xterra appeared well-designed, well-protected and sturdily built underneath.

Conclusion

With its good road manners and comfortable interior, the Xterra should prove attractive to the buyers Nissan is targeting. Well built and easy to equip for a wide variety of activities, this is a vehicle that deserves a more powerful engine and better fuel economy. The Xterra is a good choice for people who want 4X4 capability without monstrous size.

FOR

Overall comfort
Layout
Sturdy build
Roadability
Fully equipped
Manoeuvrability

AGAINST

Rear accessibility
Perfectible visibility
No MIST wiper position
High fuel consumption
Low radio position
Underpowered headlights

2000 NISSAN XTERRA

Engine: 12-valve 3.3-litre V-6

Torque: 200 lb.-ft. @ 2,800 rpm

Suspension: independent/rigid axle

Length: 452.1 cm

Height: 187.9 cm

Weight: 1,784 to 1,798 kg

Towing capacity: 1,587 kg (auto.: 2,268 kg)

Horsepower: 170 h.p. @ 4,800 rpm

Transmission: 5-speed manual; 4-speed automatic

Brakes: disc/drum

Width: 178.8 cm

Wheelbase: 264.9 cm

Tires: P265/70R15

Air bags: standard dual

Fuel consumption:

- Transport Canada rating: city: 14.5 L/100 km (19.5 mpg); highway: 11.9 L/100 km (24 mpg)
- Test result: 17 L/100 (17 mpg)

Fuel tank capacity: 73.4 litres

Acceleration: 0-100 km/h : 10.9 seconds 60-100 km/h : 8.4 seconds

Competition: Honda CR-V, Isuzu Rodeo, Jeep Cherokee, Kia Sportage

Maintenance (amount may vary from dealer to dealer):

Frequency: 3 months/6,000 km; total cost fo 100,000 km: \$1,425

Warranty:

- Full basic coverage: 3 years/60,000 km
- Powertrain: 5 years/100,000 km
- Surface corrosion: 3 years/60,000
- Perforation damage: 5 years/unlimited mileage
- Emissions control system: 3 years/60,000 km (full coverage); 8 years/130,000 km (catalytic converter, electronic control module and on-board diagnostic device)

Factory replacement parts:

Rear bumper: \$334

Front brake disk: \$102

Brake pads: \$121

Muffler: \$290

Front fender: \$206

Average insurance premium (Quebec City, replacement cost endorsement, claim-free insurance record, female driver or male driver 30 to 40 years old): \$617 to \$947

Price according to trim line:

\$28,998

Main options:

Automatic transmission: \$1,200

Price as tested: \$28,998

Freight and preparation: \$953

Dealers:

Quebec: 53

Canada: 146