



Welcome entrant in the wagon bracket

Nissan Wingroad

Type: Five-seater wagon.

Price: \$30,380.

Engine: Four cylinder DOHC
16v 1.8 petrol.

Power: 94kW at 5200rpm.

Torque: 176Nm at 4800rpm.

Acceleration: 0-100kmh 9.9
secs.

Weight: 1310kg.

Economy: 7.2L/100km.

VERDICT: A spacious
surprise package of great
value and real talent. Could
do with more grip, but drives
very well.

You can tell the Wingroad has links with Nissan's Tiida hatch and sedan, with its forced, pulled-back headlamp 'smile'. But from the screen pillars rearwards, the Wingroad is a nicely formed two-box wagon.

Mind you, the Wingroad isn't exactly conventional in profile. There's a kink in the shape of the sideglasses and the result is surprisingly attractive, with the sweeping kink removing any boxiness from the equation and setting the Wingroad up as a smart sporting family's holdall.

So you tend to expect the vehicle to offer plenty of space, but I was genuinely shocked to find that even when the front seat was adjusted for my not inconsiderable 1.88m frame, rear legroom is quite remarkable.

It's helped by slim rear seats, clad in fairly well-padded wool twill which will take seriously large people with remarkable ease for a vehicle in the 1.8-litre segment.

So, as well as families and fleet the Nissan wagon might well be a

useful choice for a lifestyler on a budget and it's doubtful that many other cars could offer such a good combination of space and accommodation for 30 grand.

A rear seat fold-flat facility further stretches load capacity, and



with such a wide gap between the front and back seats, the seat base doesn't need to be lifted to execute the move and the headrests don't need to be removed either, while the two front seats offer sufficient support for a day at the wheel.

The only complaint about the interior is the after-market Pioneer stereo head with rice grain-sized station buttons that require stiletto thin fingers if you're to operate them accurately.

Ergonomically, everything else was hunky dory with a very classy steering wheel, behind which were a pair of metal-finished shift paddles which are the driver's direct interface with the



seconds – good for any 1.8 wagon, never mind an auto, and Nissan would be wise to hurry up the introduction of CVT on the Tiidas whose transmissions are not a patch on the Wingroad's.

The car's ultimate cornering power is restricted by the tyre and wheel choice. 15-inch steel wheels and 185/65 tyres offer less grip than the car deserves, and understeer, is a dominant factor during cornering. A change to fatter alloys would fix this and make the car look more serious too, for the standard rims and trims look a tad apologetic.

Ride quality is good however, and the Wingroad's ability to dispatch bumps with little fuss conspires with the powertrain's smoothness to create a budget station wagon capable of covering

big distances with uncanny refinement and grace.

Considering the car's home-comfort levels, with power windows and mirrors, key-in-your-pocket entry and and start system and well-sorted air conditioning, just over \$30,000 doesn't sound like much to pay at all. Nissan's new wagon is a welcome entrant into the mid-sized wagon bracket, surely one to bring back to mind when the sensible family car awards come around.

Wingroad's CVT six-step transmission. Those steps only manifest themselves when you decide to physically override the transmission's electronics and squeezing off down shifts and triggering upchanges is immense fun. For about 20 minutes.

After that owners will probably leave the paddles alone, as the 1.8-litre power unit revels in working with the CVT to whirr the Wingroad up to speed. Being able to lock the car into a step may prove handy on hills or with a trailer, but for me, the paddles will be an occasional tool.

The 94kW power unit manages to whisk the Wingroad to 100kmh in 9.9

Wednesday, 28 November 2007, p. 8