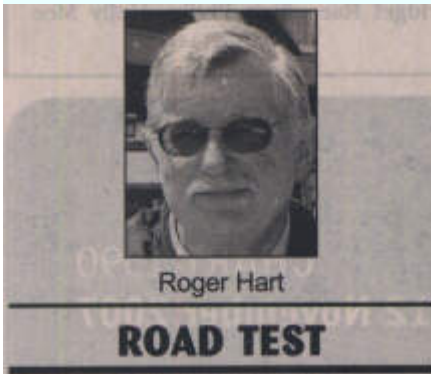




Nissan X-Trail on the Old Dunstan Road



Since the arrival of the first X-Trail, Nissan has been very definite about the advantages this vehicles off-road "X" factor gives it over the opposition.

So they very appropriately launched the new version with a challenging drive into the Otago high country, covering most of the Old Dunstan Road, with a side trip

to take in some interesting stock tracks through Rocklands station. Nissan has carefully kept the previous X-Trail's traditional looks



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for the new one. Although none of the body panels are shared, the new one looks very similar to what it replaces. So much so that unless old and new are side by side (or you can see inside) when it can be seen the new one is both larger in all directions and marginally better looking. But standing alone it is difficult to tell which is which.

What you must look for are the crease along the side, bigger glass areas all-round, the different third side window and the deeper rear lift up door for easier loading of the also larger load area.

It is larger at 603 litres when the seats are up and a massive 1773 litres with them folded and the clever two-level floor with its sliding drawer removed.

The variable-valve timed, 2.5 litre four-cylinder petrol engine continues but now has 125kW and 226Nm of torque. Gearboxes are either a six-speed manual or CVT auto. This is said to give fuel economy of 9.3litres/100km, which is better than even the previous manual version. Both these new gearboxes make the most of the engines stronger mid-range power.

Most of the new X-Trails (the exception being the ST) have the latest development of Nissan's very useful All-Mode system which now adds an "I" to its name. As previously this four-wheel drive system is electronically controlled but now has sensors to monitor and immediately adjust for G-forces from all directions, yaw rates and steering angles.

This chimes in very nicely with the unobtrusive electronic stability and traction control. Which reveals some of that "X" factor with the Thursday, 15 November 2007, p. 14

now always present feelings of stability and poise as the combined systems dish out the power to the wheel/wheels with the most grip and effectively remove any under or oversteer. And then these systems immediately adapt to changes from the highway to driving on rough tracks.

Thereon the easy-to-use rotary knob was at first changed from front wheel drive only to auto then into 4WD lock for the harder off-road work (stays locked in up to 40km/h). While it doesn't have a low range this smart system meant driving over those rough and steep tracks through this very unique part of the South Island was a rewarding, comfortable treat.

And just the right place to use the new downhill descent control just lock up the 4WD, press the descent button, feet off the pedals and down you go no faster than 7km/h. Then dodging among the rugged rocks and making good use of the decent approach and departure angles

of 26 and 22 degrees respectively, the wading depth of 350mm and the 200mm ground clearance.

The changes made to the MacPherson struts at front, the new multi-link system at the rear and having friction control dampers all-round are the reasons for the refined, comfortable ride whatever the terrain.

Also the new electric power steering impressed with its good feel and precise 10.6-metre turning circle.

And thankfully this time around, X-Trails dash has a conventional

look with the dials in front of the driver (the previous model's dash now looks a bit like it was put together by a pre-school Montessori class).

And it's not just the new dash but everything else inside to has a much plusher feel, from the plastics to the fully integrated sound system and durably comfortable fabrics. Front seat comfort in the previous leather clad Tis was always a real plus and this continues in the new models, especially so with the Ti-L with its now heated front seats.

The entry-level ST whose equipment includes front, side and curtain airbags, air con, trip computer, cruise control, single CD system, power windows, remote keyless entry, roof rails and more costs \$35,395 for the six speed manual while the CVT auto adds a further \$1600.

The mid-range ST-L gets the electronic stability system with traction, hill start/ descent controls, 16-inch alloys and costs \$36,895 for the manual and \$38,495 for the auto.

The top of the range, auto only Tis start at \$40,595 and get 17 inch alloys, climate air-con, six-stack CD player and a very large sunroof. The full leather kit with heating and power shift for the front seats cost an extra \$2300.

Footnote - Old Dunstan Rd

This was the original route into Central Otago, the trail for which was blazed in the early 1860s when two American miners discovered gold at Dunstan, just north west of the current Clyde Dam (and now covered by Lake Dunstan.)

The Old Dunstan Road was a shorter haul by 48km to Central Otago than was the "Pig Root". But the Dunstan, which crosses four mountain ranges, the Lammerlaws, the Rock and Pillar, Rough Ridge and Raggedy Ranges, was and remains much more desolate.

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dangerous and isolated. And is closed during winter as it climbs to over 1000 metres in a couple of places and is snow bound.

Horse drawn drays took two to three weeks to haul supplies from Dunedin to Dunstan and return over what was a very rough track. Bullock wagons took even longer. The wagoners used to travel in groups to help one another, putting two teams together to climb steep hills and get through the mud. On the descents large rocks were tied behind the wagons to slow things down!

Fast facts

Engine: In-line 1794cc DOHC mid mounted 4 cylinder. 103kW at 6400rpm, and 170Nm at 4200rpm.

Transmission: Rear wheel drive through a six-speed clutchless semi/automatic gearbox.

Steering: rack and pinion, 10 metre turning circle.

Suspension: MacPherson struts front and rear with stabiliser bars.

Size: Length 3885mm, width 1695mm, height 1240mm, wheelbase 2450mm, weight 1045kg. Fuel Tank: 48 litres. Used about 8 litres/100 kilometres.

Brakes: Power assisted ventilated discs front and rear. ABS, EBD, VSC & traction control.

Wheels/Tyres: 15 inch alloys at front with 185/55 tyres. Rear 16 inch alloys with 215/45s.

Performance: (given figures)
0-100km/h 8.9 seconds.
Maximum speed 210km/h.

Price: \$51,900.

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