



# New Murano: Low price, high comfort

**A** NEAR-COUSIN of the new Maxima — it's built on the same new D platform — the second generation (Z51 model) Nissan Murano sports cross-over becomes the third element of Nissan's 2009 model blitz.

The first generation Murano only stayed with us for just over three years.

The short model cycle is explained because Nissan originally developed the Murano solely for North America, but after its success there it was hurried into right-hand-drive production.

This is a more refined Murano with enhanced 3.5-litre V6 performance and a more upmarket interior that also comes with a lower price tag.

Specifically, the outgoing luxury Ti model was priced at \$64,200 while the new Murano debuts at a competitive \$59,990.

Nissan explains the price reduction as the Murano being cheaper to build —

primarily because its design from day one was as a global vehicle for both left and right-hand-drive markets.

Styling follows an evolutionary theme, with the Murano once again having a pronounced chrome grille, even more unusual headlights and a coupe-like silhouette.

It has the same 2825mm wheelbase as the first generation, but is 65mm longer overall, while being 5mm wider and 25mm taller than the original.

It has revised strut-type front suspension and a multi-link rear arrangement and one of the key changes is the 3.5-litre V6 engine sits 30mm lower in the chassis, which not only allows a lower centre of gravity, but allows the driveshafts to be angled flatter, which reduces torque steer characteristics.

It retains its confident stance with a wide track, prominent wheel arches and 18-inch alloy wheels with 235/65 dimension tyres that plant a broad

footprint on the road. And the Murano has a full-size alloy spare wheel.

It's the familiar 3.5-litre VQ-Series engine but now with a variable intake system and more sophisticated variable valve timing that works over a bigger rev range to develop 191kW at 6600rpm — a healthy boost of 19kW over the old model with peak torque also increasing by 18Nm to 336Nm.

The Murano uses the JATCO-built Xtronic continuously variable transmission combined with sophisticated All Mode 4x4-Intelligent system. The Murano is front-wheel-drive until the front wheels begin the slip — however, it always moves away from stationary in four-wheel-drive — and a 50:50 centre diff lock mode can be selected for slippery conditions.

The long-legged and stepless CVT is a contributor to making the Murano among the most fuel-efficient of six-cylinder SUVs. Average fuel



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COMFORT: Upmarket interior makes more use of textured finishes.



11/06/2009

Page: 14

General News

Region: Bay of Plenty

Circulation: 19539

Type: Community

Size: 917.40 sq.cms

Frequency: ---T---

consumption is now rated at 10.9 litres per 100km which is a 9.1 per cent improvement over the old model.

There's a more rigid body with increased use of high tensile steels and impact absorbing technology and the Murano's standard safety features include Vehicle Dynamics Control electronics with antilock brakes and traction control, six airbags and active front seat head restraints.

The more upmarket interior makes more use of soft plastics and textured finishes and authentic aluminium trim provides a cabin highlight. Double

stitched leather is now standard with a black interior on all models apart from the bronze coloured cars which have an ivory leather.

Murano comes with a loaded specification that now features a standard reversing camera — with predictive guidance — along with intelligent key providing push button start and keyless opening, a premium 11-speaker Bose audio system with six-stack CD player, rain sensor wipers, a trip computer, eight-way power adjustable driver's seat plus a reach and rake adjustable steering column.

Also standard is an electric opening and closing tailgate that can be operated from the key, a button on the dash and a third button on the tailgate.

The original Murano was a successful addition to the Nissan range and the second generation will reinforce its reputation as a competitively priced six-cylinder sports crossover with not only high comfort and specification levels but also car-like agile handling and sure-footed adhesion.

— Colin Smith



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