

Easy EV BY JOE SAGE

When we had a Nissan Leaf in 2011, its first year, it was delivered on a flatbed, we had it for just three days, its 80 kW motor was powered by a 24 kWh battery, and range was 100 miles or less—you never wanted to be too far from a plug. Flash forward, and power, battery capacity and range are all doubled or more. This one was driven to us like any other; we had it for a full week; and charging is available all over the map. Technology has evolved—attitudes even moreso.

Our Leaf is the top of three trims in the bigger of two battery capacities, but you can get in the game for under \$30 grand. Various EV incentives remain (from purchase to plates to utility rates).

For all that's still magical and new about EVs, we also found magic in the fact that the Leaf is now more mainstream in appearance (Nissan's family styling cues work especially well here), and its operation is conventional enough to leave novelty where it makes you smile, while being like any other car in every meaningful way. There's enough energy headroom now to painlessly include everything from power heated seats and premium audio to stylish low-

profile wheels and tires. AC runs off electric charge rather than belt-drive and is every bit as effective.

In 2011, a 66-mile roundtrip left us right at the limits of range. This time, after three or four days of routine driving, we had over 100 miles of range left, charged back up to 80 percent at an EVgo station while grabbing a sandwich, then took a day trip to Lake Pleasant and out past Wickenburg.

Our drive up was spirited and carefree, leaving 115 miles of range for a 70-mile return, clearly more than enough, but we changed from D (drive) to B (more aggressive regenerative braking). The range gauge then dropped noticeably more slowly, while the drive was just as much fun—a simple trick.

Leaf's 250 lb-ft of torque (almost that of a 370Z), on tap from the word "go," provides quick launches, flat cornering, strong freeway ramp acceleration and confident lane changes. Expect others on the road to be surprised, as your pep and precision may match a V8 muscle car or \$150k luxury performance roadster in the next lane.

Leaf's E-Pedal mode follows your application or release of pedal immediately. It can bring you to a full stop at slower speeds or on a hill, but you do need to be ready to brake the regular way.

There are two common questions about driving an EV: [a] is it complicated? and [b] is it fun? The answers to these from behind the wheel of the new Nissan Leaf are [a] no, and [b] yes! ■

SPECIFICATIONS

PLATFORM / SEATS	dedicated EV, battery in floor / five
MOTOR	high-response 160 kW AC synchronous
BATTERY	62 kWh laminated lithium-ion, 288 cells: warranty 8 yrs/100,000 mi (defects, excess capac loss)
HP/TORQUE	214 hp / 250 lb-ft
CHARGE	6.6 kW on-board, 6.0 kW output 240V in ±11.5 hrs, quick charge 45 minutes to 80%
RANGE	(EPA est) 226 miles
EMISSIONS	Tier3Bino0/CFV ZEV, ILEV (Fed), ZEV (Calif)
DRIVE / TRANSMISSION	FWD / single speed reducer
SHIFTER	shift-by-wire drive selector
DRIVE MODES	Normal; Eco-Mode (increased regen braking, limits motor and HVAC output); B-mode (more aggressive regen braking during deceleration); E-Pedal advanced one-pedal operation
SUSPENSION	F: indep MacPherson strut w coils, stblzr bar; R: torsion beam w integrated stblzr bar
STEERING	vehicle speed-sensitive elec power
BRAKES	co'op regenerative; 4-whl pwr assist disc: F: 11.14x1.1" vented / R: 11.5x0.63" vented
WHEELS / TIRES	17" alum-alloy / 215/50R17 energy sav
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	176.4 / 106.3 in
TURNING CIRCLE	36.1 ft
GROUND CLRNC / APPR/DEPART	5.9 in / 16.7/25.9°
HEADROOM (F/R)	41.2 / 37.3 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	42.1 / 33.5 in
WEIGHT	3753 lb
CARGO CAPACITY	23.6 / 30.0 cu.ft
MPG (MPGe)	TBD

SL PLUS INCLUDES: E Pedal Mode, NissanConnect EV, nav, services, Apple/Android, 8" infotain scrn, 17" alloys, Bose prem 7-spkr audio, LED hdlt, high beam assist, ProPILOT assist, steering assist, intel cruise w full speed range & hold, auto emerg brake w ped detect, intel lane intervention, blind spot warn, rear cross traffic alert, intl around view monitor, intl driver alert, intel fwd collision warn.

BASE PRICE	\$42,550
CARPETED FLOOR MATS	135
DESTINATION CHARGE	895

TOTAL..... **\$43,580**

40 kWh	62 kWh
S\$29,990	S Plus\$36,550
SV32,600	SV Plus38,510
SL36,300	SL Plus42,550

