

Mid-lineup mid-trim midsize

by Joe Sage

In broadcast media, MOR programming means middle-of-the-road. This does not mean nondescript or vanilla—it means its content has the widest appeal. Such is the case with the popular Altima, Nissan's entry in the until recently top-selling midsize sedan category (currently usurped by compact crossovers). And such may be the case with this particular model, a mid-level trim.

Altima overall offers five front-wheel-drive trim levels with a 2.5L naturally-aspirated four-cylinder engine (of which this SV is the middle), each also offering AWD (adding \$1450 to our SV). Base prices for the range run from \$24,100 to \$33,530.

Add two more models with a 2.0L turbo, which bumps output up from 188 to 248 hp and torque from 180 lb-ft to 273—a powertrain available only on second-from-lowest SR trim and top-top Platinum, and only with front-wheel drive. Base prices for the two turbos are \$29,750 and \$35,180.

All have the same xTronic continuously variable transmission (CVT).

All-wheel drive adds 131 pounds; rear brakes and stabilizer bar dimensions are slightly different to accommodate its build; fuel mileage drops by two or three points across the board; horsepower is six points lower, and torque two—acceptable tradeoffs for AWD traction and tracking.

The styling—all-new in the 2019 model year—

has evolved in several subtle ways. In a departure from brandwide cues, gone are the Z-car-inspired headlights with their notch along their upper edge. The corporate grille remains but is evolving, now framing most of the grille opening. Gloss black inserts in the C pillar are a cue from Maxima, simultaneously giving the car an attractive, distinctive and more premium look and feel.

Overall, the new Altima retains its image (now rich enough that it can almost even be taken for that pricier Maxima in the absence of a side-by-side comparison).

For \$2460 more than our SV, you can choose the SL. Or in the apples and oranges department, you could opt for the move from SV to SL (staying with FWD) instead of adding AWD to the SV. This migration costs \$1010 more than adding AWD, but would give you leather seating, Bose nine-speaker premium audio and other upgrades. It's an interesting drill, made all the more interesting when you consider the full five trim levels. (The availability of the 2.0L models adds to this complexity, but also simplifies it, if you're interested, thanks to its two-trim, one-drive-configuration lineup.)

Add the Versa and Sentra below Altima in size (starting at \$14,730 and \$19,090), and the Maxima above (starting at \$34,250), and your day at the dealer could sound confusing, but will probably be

SPECIFICATIONS

BUILD	unibody: corrosion-resistant high-strength steel; aluminum-alloy hood
ENGINE	2.5L alum/alum transverse DOHC 4-cyl
HP/TORQUE	(AWD) 182 hp / 178 lb-ft
DRIVETRAIN	(optional) AWD
TRANSMISSION	xTronic CVT
SUSPENSION	F: indep strut w coils, alum links, 25mm stblzr bar; R: multi-link indep, 22mm stblzr bar (AWD)
STEERING	dual pinion electric power, speed-sensitive
BRAKES	4-whl pwr-assist EBD, ABS: F: 11.65x1.02 vented; R: (AWD) 11.02x0.38 solid
WHEELS	(SV) 17-in machined alum-alloy, painted inserts
TIRES	215/55R17 AS, 16x4T temp spare/steel wheel
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	192.9 / 111.2 in
TURNING CIRCLE	37.4 ft
GROUND CLEARANCE	na
HEADROOM (F/R)	39.2 / 36.9 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	43.8 / 35.2 in
CARGO CAPACITY	15.4 cu ft
WEIGHT	(SV AWD) 3399 lb
FUEL CAPACITY	(AWD) 16.0 gal
MPG	26/36/30 (city/hwy/comb)
BASE PRICE	\$29,230
SPLASH GUARDS	205
MATS/NET/HOOKS	floor mats, trunk mat, hideaway net and dual trunk hooks.....300
GROUND LIGHTING	380
INTERIOR ACCENT LIGHTING	455
ILLUMINATED KICK PLATES	400
REAR SPOILER	420
IMPACT SENSORS	210
DESTINATION CHARGE	895
TOTAL	\$32,495

liberating. Start with your size preference and budget, see where that puts you, and cross-shop from there. You really can't go wrong. ■

