

Nothing rascally about it

BY JOE SAGE

Evolution picks up the pace in the midsize Rogue, Nissan's top-selling model in the industry's biggest segment

Nissan is in the process of a thorough model changeover. New or redesigned versions of Altima, Versa, Sentra and Titan have been recently introduced. Here we have a new Nissan Rogue—their top-selling model, in turn their entry in the top-selling midsize crossover segment. And four more new models will go into production this year.

Immediately noticeable is significantly evolved styling. Nissan has moved quite cautiously in this department, working hard to maintain a family face throughout their lineup (and arguably constricting themselves a bit in the process). This year, things move forward more dramatically, while still maintaining familiar cues (its three-sided metal trim now borders and defines the grille rather than randomly inhabiting it, a change we applaud). It's really a comprehensive leap—the new Rogue's shape, stance and general bearing give it, to our eye, a bit of the personality and presence of the lineup's three-row flagship Armada.

From the side, this is a distinctively handsome vehicle. A nice crease runs from a suggestion of a rear wheel haunch (though it's a front-drive-based vehicle) that continues across the taillights as far as the liftgate, an identifying detail in a world of similar rear ends. Beyond the grille's evolution,

Rogue front the front has entirely new lighting (arguably evolved from the Juke, with its combination of functions divided between smaller upper and larger lower fixtures). Compared with generations one and two (plus a refresh of gen two), this third generation effort definitely picks up the pace on styling. It still may not quite have achieved movie star looks, but it is a very good provider.

The new Rogue is built upon an entirely new platform, promising a more dynamic ride quality, while also hosting an ever-expanding range of tech features.

Dynamics include a new powertrain, new rear multi-link suspension, a new steering system and new Vehicle Motion Control technology. Horsepower is up 10 percent, torque three percent, and even atop all that new power, fuel economy is up four percent.

Nissan has led the way with many tech features over the past decade or two, from cameras to advanced driver assist. New here is available ProPILOT Assist enhanced with Navi-link (included on our top Platinum example), for door-to-door navigation that can proactively reduce speed for upcoming freeway curves, interchanges and exits.

Nissan Safety Shield® 360, a comprehensive

suite of increasingly familiar driver assist technologies, has now been added to all trim levels. Additional features include traffic sign recognition, driver alertness tech and rear door alert.

Rogue's family-oriented interior (which Nissan is calling a "family hub") includes tri-zone climate control (driver, front passenger and second row), along with wireless Apple CarPlay and wireless charging, and four-door intelligent key.

We found the Rogue's controls and interfaces well laid out and its cabin comfortable and spacious. The center stack's interrelationship of physical knobs and switches with its touchscreen are almost deceptively clean and simple, as orientation and ongoing access are quick, clear and effective. Virtual-physical integration continues with such basic but vital controls as its cameras (Nissan has been a pioneer of all-around imaging) and mirrors, which together are far more accurate than average for backing into tight spots.

Nissan describes Rogue as versatile, fun, edgy and adventurous. The dictionary says a rogue is a rascal, scoundrel, swindler, knave or worse. The 2021 Nissan Rogue is refined to the point you'll probably have to take on those more questionable duties yourself. It will be too polite to object. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

FACTORY	.....Smyrna Vehicle Assembly, Tennessee
ENGINE	....2.5L 16v DOHC transverse alum/alum inline-4
HP/TORQUE	.....181 hp / 181 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO	.....12.0:1
DRIVETRAIN	.....FWD (AWD avail)
TRANSMISSION	.....Xtronic (CVT) w manual mode w paddles, Eco and Sport modes
SUSPENSION	....F: indep strut w coils, twin tube shocks, 24.2mm stblzr bar; R: indep multi-link, twin tube shocks, 27.5mm stblzr bar
STEERING	.....elec pwr assist, vehicle-speed variable
BRAKES	.....F: 11.65x1.02; R: 11.5x0.63 vented discs
WHEELS	.....7.0J x 19 alum alloy
TIRES	.....235/55R19 all-season
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	.....183.0 / 106.5 in
TURNING CIRCLE	.....35.4 ft
GROUND CLEARANCE	.....8.2 in
APPR / DEPART / BRKOVER	.....19.0 / 23.6 / 17.9°
HEADROOM (F/R)	.....(w/moonrfl) 39.2 / 37.8 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	.....41.5 / 38.5 in
CARGO CAPACITY	.....36.5 / 74.1 cu.ft
WEIGHT	.....3512 lb
TOW CAPACITY	.....1350 lb
FUEL CAPACITY	.....14.5 gal
MPG	.....26/34/29 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE	.....\$35,430
FLOOR MATS / CARGO AREA PROTECTOR	.....385
DESTINATION CHARGE	.....1095
TOTAL	.....\$36,910

Platinum trim includes quilted Nappa semi-aniline leather, 12-inch TFT instrumentation, heads-up display, wireless Apple CarPlay, wireless charging pad, ProPILOT Assist with Navi Link, and front-side-rear sonar. // Front door pockets accommodate a 32-oz bottle, while the rear cargo area has a well for a one-gallon jug. // Rear doors open almost 90 degrees.

2021 NISSAN ROGUE LINEUP

Rogue S	.....FWD/AWD	.....\$25,650 / 27,050
Rogue SV	.....FWD/AWD	.....\$27,340 / 28,740
Rogue SL	.....FWD/AWD	.....\$32,000 / 33,400
Rogue Platinum	.....FWD/AWD	.....\$35,430 / 36,830

