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Infiniti Q30 Road Test

Published: June 1, 2016

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Online version: <https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/infiniti-q30-road-test/>



Infiniti Q30 Sport City Black 2.2 Auto 4x4 Offers Ownership Exclusivity... Says David Miles (Miles Better News Agency)

If you want a premium brand mid-sized family or business use car and don't fancy the now high volume selling and commonplace Audi A3, BMW 1 Series, Mercedes A-Class, Volvo V40 or Lexus CT, then the new Infiniti Q30 hatchbacks and future QX30 mid-sized SUVs might fit the bill.

The Q30/QX30 models are expected to double Infiniti's sales but in this country we are talking about limited numbers as their UK sales last year only amounted to just over 1,900 vehicles. However Infiniti's UK sales for the first third of this year are up by 111% to 859 units, with the growth fuelled by the new Q30 hatchbacks which are now on sale - and the



QX30 SUV arrives later this year. Both are being built in the UK for global sales at the parent company's Nissan Sunderland Plant.

There is a relatively large array of Q30 models. I counted 40 derivatives in the price list with prices starting from £20,550 and rising to £34,890. No prices have yet been released for the QX30 SUV.

The Q30/QX30 Infiniti models are products of the Renault-Nissan Alliance and include its latest partner Daimler. The new Q30 models use the latest Mercedes A-Class/GLA platform, in addition to which three of the four engine options are from Mercedes. The Q30 hatchback engine choices are a 1.5D 109 hp turbodiesel from Renault-Nissan and from Mercedes the 1.6 turbo 122 hp petrol, the 2.0 211 hp turbo petrol and a 2.2 170 hp turbodiesel. All engines, depending on the specification level chosen, are available with 6-speed manual or 7-speed dual clutch automatic transmissions. The 2.0 petrol and 2.2 turbodiesel engine models are also available with 4WD. The QX30 Crossover style SUV will only be available with those same 2.0 petrol and 2.2 turbodiesel engines and will have 4WD as standard.

There are three core spec levels, SE, Premium and Sport. Extra cost sub-spec levels are City Black, Tech, Tech Gallery White, Tech Café Teak and Business Executive. Which level of specification and which engine will be the most popular in the UK will depend upon how successful the Q30 is in gaining fleet and user-chooser customers. It is likely retail customers will choose the 1.6 turbo petrol engine and fleet/business users the fuel frugal and low CO2 1.5D turbodiesel unit.

At the UK's media launch in February I briefly tried the overall likely best selling version – the 1.5D, 109 hp turbodiesel manual with Premium Tech specification, priced at £26,430. Driven around the busy roads in the Reading area this version returned 55.3 mpg, good but well below the official Combined Cycle figure of 68.9 mpg. The CO2 emissions are a low 108 g/km so VED road tax is minimal cost of £0 First Year rate and then only £20 thereafter. Those all-important company car drivers will get away with 21% Benefit-in-Kind tax costs.



For a longer driving experience with this niche premium brand C-segment hatchback I got behind the wheel of the 2.2-litre 190 hp turbodiesel with its 7-speed dual clutch auto gearbox and it had the £1,550 extra cost 4WD option. With the Sport City Black high level of spec this model weighed in at a hefty £33,890, but choose a lower specification level and with the same engine/drivetrain, the price is down to £27,300. This looks competitive and the spec is still good and includes electric windows and door mirrors, air-con, cruise control, Bluetooth, touchscreen, stop-start, rear parking sensors, lane departure warning, 60/40 split folding rear seats and alloy wheels.



My Sport City Black had all that and much more including adaptive front lighting, auto headlights/wipers, lots of high gloss lacquer interior and exterior trim, Alcantara fascia



finish and part Alcantara and faux leather upholstery, sport design bumpers, sports suspension and brakes, Infiniti InTouch sat-nav/communication system and auto parking. The major omission for all versions is no spare wheel, just an inflation kit is provided.

The components of Q30 might come from a variety of sources but the design is all Infiniti as are the settings and performance of the suspension, the steering and the comfort of the seats. The five door Q30 has a wedge-shaped coupé side profile with a rising waistline and sloping roof towards the rear. The sides look curvaceous with deeply sculptured door panels and bulbous wheelarches shrouding 19-inch alloy wheels. The Sport version sits 15 mm (0.59 in) lower on the road with 7% firmer suspension settings. All the bold styling lines are taken from the current larger Infiniti models. There is also a hint of Crossover styling with the Q30 even before the QX30 comes along later this year.

Inside it is the same premium brand story from larger Infiniti models scaled down to the new compact hatchback model range. In the front interior is a wrap-around padded cockpit design and a standard 7-inch touchscreen sits in the middle of the high-level fascia panel. Generally the quality of the leatherette, Alcantara and plastic trim areas looks good but the switchgear, which mostly is Mercedes sourced, is scattered around the car's front interior.

This slideshow requires JavaScript.

Although classed as a C-segment hatchback it looks longer than the competition with a length of 4,425 mm (14.52 ft). The extended wheelbase of 2,700 mm (8.86 ft) gives better than average, in this class, front seat legroom but in the rear the legroom is cramped and the sloping roof restricts headroom for six-footers. The 40/60 split folding rear seat backs extend the roomy boot which offers 430 litres (15.19 cu.ft) with the rear seats in position. Rear and rear quarter visibility is not great but on my test car the front and rear parking sensors and rear view camera helped.

Generally the Q30 2.2 litre 4WD with its Sport City Black specification and larger 19-inch wheels and sports suspension provided a firm but compliant ride. The firmer sports



suspension eliminated the cornering body-roll I had experienced with my initial press launch test drive with the more softly sprung 1.5D model. The handling was sure-footed and the on-demand 4WD system gave that extra security for cornering grip on wet roads but it costs an extra £1,550 so it might not appeal to all potential owners. I would have preferred a bit more feedback from the steering which felt a bit dead around town but weighted up more on open roads. Not so good was the road noise intrusion transmitted through the suspension. Thumps from potholes and motorway suspension joints were unwelcome visitors to the car's interior.

Whereas the lack-lustre 1.5D turbodiesel engine I tried earlier this year at its media launch will appeal because of its frugal use of fuel and lower CO2 emissions, the 2.2 litre, four-cylinder 190 hp turbodiesel engine in this test car was really very responsive even in its Eco setting. With 350 Nm (258.1 lb.ft) of torque on-tap from just 1,400 rpm the acceleration from low speeds was punchy and the power delivery was strong through the mid-range. Mated with a slick seven-speed twin clutch automatic transmission the gear changes were fast and smooth.

The engine was docile around town and then lively under acceleration, whilst cruising at 70 mph was easy work. Only at start-up did the diesel engine sound less refined than some of the competitor oil-burners. The top speed is an impressive 134 mph and just as potent was the acceleration time of 8.5 seconds for the zero to 62 mph dash.

Officially the Combined Cycle fuel consumption is 57.6 mpg and during my week-long driving session, covering motorways, country roads and a few shopping trips, the figure was a realistic 46.3 mpg - which, given the performance, was commendable.

With CO2 emissions of 129 g/km, the VED road tax is £0 cost for the First Year, increasing to £110 for each year after that. Company car executives will pay 25% Benefit-in-Kind tax.

VERDICT

Despite a few shortcomings after a week living with this particular Q30 2.2 diesel auto 4WD



there was more to like than I expected, including the exclusivity value due to its relatively small UK sales numbers.

For: British-built, a very wide range of models, bold distinctive styling, well-equipped, punchy strong engine, slick auto gearbox, good real-life fuel economy, exclusivity value.

Against: Road noise intrusion, noisy engine at times, expensive 4WD option, limited rear passenger leg and head room, a minority seller in a competitive premium brand market sector, limited number of UK dealer and service centres.





MILESTONES AND WHEELS-ALIVE TECH. SPEC. IN BRIEF:

Infiniti Q30 Sport City Black 2.2D auto with 4WD.

Engine: 2.2 litre, 4 cylinder, 190 hp turbodiesel, 350 Nm (258.1 lb.ft) of torque from just 1,400 rpm.

Transmission: 7 speed twin clutch automatic and 4WD.

Power: 190 hp.

Torque: 350 Nm (258.1 lb.ft) of torque from just 1,400 rpm.

Performance:

0-62 mph: 8.5 seconds.

Top speed: 134 mph.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 57.6 mpg (46.5 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 129 g/km, VED road tax £0/£110, BIK company car tax 25%. Insurance Group: 22.

Warranty: 3 years/62,000 miles.

Dimension/capacities: L 4,425 mm (14.61 ft), W 1,805 mm (5.92 ft), H 1,475 mm (4.84 ft), boot 430 litres (15.19 cu.ft), braked towing weight 1,800 kg (3968 lb), 5-doors, 4/5 seats.

Price: £33,890.



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