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Nissan Qashqai Tekna 1.6 DIG-T 163 Road Test

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Nissan's Qashqai Goes from Strength to Strength – The UK's 5th Best-selling Car.

By David Miles (Miles Better News Agency).

Whatever the future holds for vehicle production in the UK following Brexit, Nissan by the end of this year will have increased build capacity of their British designed and built Qashqai C-segment Crossover range. They are opening a second production line to meet European demand for the Qashqai following a further £22m investment.

Nissan is this year celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Sunderland facility, which has grown to become the largest UK car plant of all-time, supporting nearly 40,000 UK jobs and



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manufacturing one in three of all cars made in Britain.



The next phase in Qashqai's development will be in 2017, using the extended production line, when it becomes the first Nissan in Europe to feature 'Piloted Drive' autonomous driving technology.

Currently 1,200 Qashqais come out of the Sunderland factory every day, with an annual production of around 300,000 vehicles. The total build to date is around 2.5 million units, with sales in 130 markets. It is the best-selling Crossover in Britain and Europe. In the UK Qashqai sales last year were 60,814 units, putting it in fifth position in the top ten sales chart.



For the first seven months of this year Qashqai UK sales are 38,183 units, retaining its fifth position and making it the UK's best selling Crossover/SUV/4×4 by far.

The Qashqai was originally launched in 2007 and has been credited with starting the Crossover sector which combines SUV style, and sometimes 4×4 ability, with family hatchback design and an elevated stance on the road. Since that time the Crossover sector has grown to encompass smaller and larger models. Such vehicles now make up the third largest new car sales sector in the UK and the largest in mainland Europe.

Prices of the latest Nissan Qashqai mainstream range start at £18,545 and rise through two petrol and two diesel engine options, and Visia, Acenta, N-Connecta and Tekna trim and equipment levels, to £28,990. A Black Edition version priced at £27,316 with added spec and a 110 hp turbodiesel engine with a manual gearbox and 2WD has just been added to the line-up.

Most models are front wheel drive with 4WD available only with the dCi 130 hp turbodiesel engine, which is also available with 2WD. Replaced in the line-up is the N-Tec level with N-Connecta taking its place. All versions are now five seaters with the 5+2 variants also deleted. 'Hot' news just in - Nissan has just introduced a 'Black Edition' based on the Tekna grade but with even higher spec. This variant is powered by the frugal 1.5 litre dCi 110 hp turbodiesel engine and priced at £27,310, which, says Nissan, represents around £1,200 in savings compared with individual option prices on Tekna models.

The full engine line-up is; 1.2 litre DIG-T 115 hp and 1.6 DIG-T 163 hp turbocharged petrol units and the 1.5 litre dCi 110 hp and 1.6 dCi 130 hp turbodiesels, and all engines have Start/Stop as standard. Xtronic auto transmissions are available with the DIG-T 115 hp petrol and dCi 130 hp turbodiesel units, depending upon the specification level chosen. With the latest engine line-up petrol and diesel units are expected to split UK sales 50/50.

The latest Qashqai uses the Renault-Nissan alliance Common Module Family flat-floor platform as does its Renault competitor, the Kadjar Crossover which also uses the same



engines, transmissions with 2WD/4WD models and is a shade less pricey.



Functionality has played a big part in the success story of the Qashqai because it is easy to drive, easy to use and relatively versatile with its seating and load carrying options layout. For instance the load space has two reversible floor panels that can easily be raised or lowered, providing 16 possible configurations to either maximise luggage volume or provide a full flat floor with rear seats folded. Additionally the rear boards easily slots into a vertical position providing an ideal sized space for carrying shopping bags. The load cover fits neatly under the luggage floor allowing bulky items to be loaded. The luggage boards feature a wipe-clean surface on one side and soft carpet on the other, so muddy boots can be transported without fear of damaging the textile surfaces. The boot has a capacity of 430 litres (15.19 cu.ft) but with the rear seats folded flat this goes up to 1,585 litres (55.97 cu.ft) and the model I tried has a braked towing weight of 1,500 kg (3,307 lb) so whether it's used



for family leisure travel or a workhorse it's very practical.



But practicality alone will not sell vehicles. They have to look smart and the latest Qashqai looks fairly bland in that area although I think the Renault Kadjar has a little more styling flair inside and out. The clamshell bonnet design of the Qashqai comes out of the premium car brand league with the flared wheelarches, rising waistline and coupé sloping roofline with its rear spoiler giving a mix of athleticism and SUV muscle power, but it lacks the edgy lines of its new generation competitors.

Inside, the latest models have an increased level of specification and connectivity features, again important additions on a customer's must-have list. We always want more so that is what the latest Qashqai has - depending on the spec level chosen - and much of this new



technology is available as standard on N-Connecta and Tekna levels. There is a comprehensive suite of advanced technology features including Nissan's Safety Shield which incorporates Forward Emergency Braking, Driver Attention Alert and Traffic Sign Recognition, along with several other vital driver aids, while Intelligent Park Assist takes the stress out of urban manoeuvres. What the latest Qashqai offers is accessibility to premium brand technology and that is what today's customers want - but at reasonable prices. Of course there is a comprehensive list of extra cost options for customers to tailor their Qashqai to meet their needs.

Not that my test car version needed any additions. Showcasing the latest Qashqai, Nissan sent me the 1.6 litre DIG-T 163 hp turbocharged petrol engine with manual gearbox and front wheel drive, and the top Tekna specification, priced on-the-road at £25,380. This is £1,725 cheaper and more powerful than the Tekna 130 hp turbodiesel manual but of course the running costs will be slightly higher.

This new engine replaces the old naturally aspirated 2.0 litre petrol unit and it has more power, more torque, it's cleaner and more fuel-efficient. For the record top speed is 124 mph and the zero to 62 mph acceleration time is 9.1 seconds. Other figures to consider are fuel consumption and in the Combined Cycle the figure is 47.1 mpg. In real life my week long test driving returned an average of 43.2 mpg but on a longer motorway journey it reached 47.4 mpg because of its 'tall' fifth and sixth overdrive gear ratios. Due to these high ratios and a slow-to-react turbocharger, acceleration response can be sluggish. The engine develops 240 Nm (177 lb.ft) of torque from 2,000 rpm, which is a relatively high engine speed these days, so when travelling on winding country roads and commuter routes in traffic, I found myself driving the vehicle in fourth gear much of the time. And if you want acceleration on the open road to pass slower vehicles you need to change from sixth to at least fourth gear to get the revs needed for the turbo to boost power. Such are the penalties of having high gear ratios for improved fuel economy and lower CO2 emissions. The CO2 emissions are 138 g/km so VED road tax is £130 each year and company car drivers will pay 23% Benefit-in-Kind tax.



The new petrol engine might be more powerful and quieter in operation but it lacks the 'grunt', response and fluidity of the 1.5 litre dCi 130 hp turbodiesel unit, but that engine considerably pushes up the price of the Qashqai in a very competitive and growing market sector. Competitors include the Renault Kadjar, Ford Kuga, Kia Sportage, Hyundai Tucson, Suzuki Vitara, Honda HR-V and VW Tiguan to name but a few - and with similar vehicles from SEAT and Skoda about to join the fray.

VERDICT

The Qashqai has been popular because of its overall packaging of must-have SUV styling, high equipment levels, competitive pricing and versatile seating, and all bundled up in compact length of 4,377 mm (14.36 ft). It rides well enough and handles well enough and that sums it up. It does most things well enough to justify its long reign as leader of the Crossover pack but the competition is more numerous and prices keener.

For: A good all round versatile and useful package, British-built, high spec, good quality and well laid out interior, quiet engine, reasonable running costs.

Against: Conservative exterior styling, lacks the kerb appeal of the Renault Kadjar, petrol engine lacks low speed grunt.



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Milestones and Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

Nissan Qashqai Tekna 1.6 DIG-T 163, manual, front wheel drive Crossover.

Engine: 1.6 litre, four cylinder, turbocharged direct injection petrol, 163 hp, 240 Nm (177 lb.ft) of torque from 2,000 rpm.

Transmission: Six speed manual, front wheel drive.



Performance:

0-62 mph: 9.1 seconds.

Top speed: 124mph.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 47.1 mpg (43.2 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 138 g/km, VED road tax £130, BIK company car tax 23%.
Insurance Group: 17E.

Warranty: Three years/60,000 miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,377 mm (14.36 ft), W 1,806 mm (5.93 ft) H 1,590 mm (5.22 ft), boot/load space 430 to 1,585 litres (15.19 to 55.97 cu.ft), braked towing weight 1,500 kg (3,307 lb), 5-doors/5-seats.

Price: £25,380.