Latest Nissan LEAF – Road Test

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The all-electric Nissan LEAF e+ Tekna ProPilot 62 kWh...

...Put through its paces by Robin Roberts (and Miles Better News Agency).

Of the 115,087 new cars registered in the UK in January this year one in five were electrified models of some sort, either mild hybrids through to full electric battery models.

They are gaining in popularity.

How a car holds onto its popularity and value is a good indicator of its real worth, as in the case of the Nissan LEAF.

The world's first mass market all-electric family car was introduced in 2010 and for the UK and Europe it's built in Sunderland where about 200,000 have been made in a decade. It's won seven used car awards in three years.

There are currently five models in the series utilising 150 PS 40 kWh or 217 PS 62 kWh traction batteries from around £27,000 to £35,000 and based on four trim levels.


NISSAN

Prices have come down to keep within the Government's £2,500 grant incentive to encourage EV ownership.

Electric car buyers can now get their vehicle, home charger and standard home installation from Nissan dealerships in a new finance offer with a single monthly payment as a result of Nissan working with Pod Point and E.ON.

Over the 12 years of its run and two model generations, Nissan has carefully refined the powertrain and accessories and raised the range from an initial 73 miles per charge to almost 240 miles. That's a big achievement and still a challenge for many late-comers to the EV charging posts.

Little wonder then that one used car analyst reports that the Nissan LEAF was Britain's fastest selling used car in 2021, taking an average of just 17 days to leave forecourts in the autumn compared to 44 days at the beginning of 2021.

For dealers that's a nice little earner and shows that while new EVs may be over-priced for many, their attraction as used models is growing as a direct result of petrol and diesel price rises.

Of course, behind that lies the hard decision on whether or not an owner can gamble on the battery pack surviving for a few more years as eight to ten years was deemed average and they are expensive to replace with very few engineering companies able to refurbish the original.

Today's LEAF model tested was the Nissan LEAF e+ Tekna ProPilot 62 kWh, the larger capacity version attracting the e+ suffix, with the highly desirable dynamic driving aids and sophisticated infotainment systems linking to your mobile phone and delivering high audio quality through a number of Bose speakers.


MENU
MAP
AUDIO
CAMERA
BACK
PUSH
MODE
A/C
AUTO
PASSENGER
AIR BAG

If you thought electric cars were slow, think again. It has benefitted from some weight saving engineering, with respectable acceleration and with judicious use of the power mode button next to the gear lever giving brisk acceleration when needed for overtaking.

That also improves the retardation when used properly and you can usually drive without having to brake and just let the motor slow down the car.

The steering, however, is a disappointment. The turning circle was not tight and it felt lifeless in my hands with little feedback on twisting roads but thankfully did not display any kickback over bumps.

Handling was competent, not exciting, and the front struts and rear beam axle springing meant it easily coped with loads and gripped quite well with a comfortable ride as a further benefit, although you could hear it working away.

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It was at its best on country roads where gradient variations would recharge the battery and modestly extend range so we saw a 62 miles remaining extend to 65 miles descending a hill in Mid-Wales. Motorways quickly drained the battery and we considered a 50-60 mph speed far better than the 70 mph max..

The Tekna instruments and ProPilot features really work very well, possibly with the exception of the cruise feature on our test car which proved erratic in operation and sometimes reluctant to engage. Good cameras and sensors cover blindspots which are not visible in the small interior mirror and the wipers and washers both ends were highly effective.

Headlights and their automatic sensors were very bright but sometimes seemed slow to respond in country lanes and with oncoming vehicles.

Heating and ventilation was comprehensive but would drain about 12 miles range when

used, particularly in conjunction with the warmed wheel grips.

Oddments room was very reasonable although compartments were on the small side for a family car.

We liked the access front and back, noted the boot was very deep but had nets for stowing the two power cables, and found the seats extremely comfortable with good adjustment, shaping and support. Room in the back was good for all but the tallest passengers.

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It was very easy to charge with its frontal flap covering the domestic and fast charger ports and both cables were of sensible length, quick to use and secured when the car locked.

Our range was at best about 230 miles on a 50 kWh plug in just over an hour but a domestic point was scheduled to take over 11 hrs to refill the battery and we found it crept up from around 180 miles, all still very acceptable ranges when time permits or is precious.

So, our message from this test is to carefully pick your next EV, new or second hand, and don’t be too swayed by the battery range but rather look at the car around it and how it would work for you.

VERDICT



The original LEAF was innovative when launched, but things have moved on and this latest model represents a further improvement over earlier versions, especially in available mileage range.

For: Very roomy with excellent access, comfortable, good braking, easy to charge with choice of cables, good instruments, refined performance, long service intervals.

Against: Constant road noise, some mechanical noises, lifeless steering, average warranty.



WHEELS-ALIVE AND MILES BETTER FAST FACTS



Nissan LEAF e+ Tekna ProPilot 62kWh

Price: £34,925

Mechanical: 217 PS/ 160 kW electric motor, 62 kWh battery, automatic, front wheel drive

Max Speed: 98 mph

0 – 62 mph: 6.9 sec

Range: 239 miles, 1 hr to 11.30 hrs charge time

Insurance Group: 21E

C02 emissions: Zero g/km

Tax costs: BiK company car tax 1%*, VED First Year £0 then £145 Standard rate

** BIK rises to 2% in April for 2022-2023 tax years*

Warranty: 3 years mechanical/ 8 years battery/ 60,000 miles

Size: L 4.49 m (14.73 ft), W 2.03 m (6.66 ft), H 1.46 m (4.79 ft)

Bootspace: 420 – 1,161 litres (14.83 – 41.00 cu.ft)

Kerbweight: 1,726 kg (3,805 lb)