

Nissan Note

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New Notes from Nissan Tom Scanlan compares two brand-new models...

Nissan's new Note is altogether more purposeful-looking and loaded with new features. Two engines are on offer: the 1.2-litre 3-cylinder petrol and 1.5-litre diesel. The diesel comes at a £2000 premium, so which do you go for?

First of all work out how you're going to use the car. Will it be mainly short trips, or will you be spending a fair amount of time on dual carriageways and motorways, better for the diesel? Then there's that difference in purchase price and the four or five per cent fuel price difference.

One of the interesting points about the all-new Nissan Note is the difference in the official



combined cycle fuel consumption figures from one engine to the other: the 1.2-litre petrol engine's is 60.1 mpg – pretty good, in theory. The 1.5-litre diesel engine's figure is 78 mpg, which is impressive but no longer extraordinary in today's market. Interesting also is what I found to be the actual figure on my two test drives over very similar routes in the two cars in a variety of traffic conditions. According to the trip indicators, the petrol car's return was 48.1 mpg and the diesel 's claim was 74.0 mpg. Now you can do the arithmetic.

However, it's not just about that. The cars have different characters, so, if it's power that you want and the ability to surge past slower cars, or if you are happy with the feel of a little 3-cylinder unit pulsing happily away, then that might sway you one way or another. There's no significant difference in the acceleration figures, both cars reaching 62 mph in less than twelve seconds and with a maximum top speed of 111/112 mph.

As to the car in other respects, it is typical of the current crop of second decade, 21st century vehicles that is loaded with technology. Even in this B-sector car, you have Bluetooth, trip and eco-computer, cruise control and speed limiter, stop/start and much more. But Nissan's latest gizmo is its AVM (Around View Monitor) camera system, part of what it calls its Safety Shield System. Already available on the Qashqai, for an optional £400 you get a very sophisticated monitoring of what's all around the car, with its own built-in self washing system. It includes a lane departure warning. However, two questions arise here: does the camera's rear position delay the response by vital micro seconds? And does it work 100%, as claimed, on roads where the white lines are somewhat worn out? On my drive, there was no warning when I tested this out on one country road that needed its lines re-painted. The car also analyses and informs the driver how economically efficiently he or she is driving through a display in the instrument cluster.

Generally, well done to Nissan for providing such sophisticated and useful feature at such a reasonable price.

The new Notes were both very pleasant and easy to drive. The 1.2 petrol needed more gear-changing than the diesel, especially if going up a long incline, but that was no problem with

such an easy gearbox. Both cars proved to be pretty quiet. The 3-cylinder engine is of course noticeable when pressed for acceleration, but the loudest noise in both cars was probably from the tyres (not that that was particularly intrusive).

Handling, steering and braking were all up to the mark, making the car enjoyable to drive.

Safety features abound and include front, side and curtain airbags, and ESP (Electronic Stability Programme), along with other anti-skid features.

The Note is a four-seater, but it is better than some bigger cars at squeezing in a third person in the back for short trips. My test car was fitted with a rear bench that could be moved forwards and backwards, helping with that all-important knee-room.

The rear doors open extra wide, too, which certainly eases getting in and out.



The boot is cleverly designed with two levels to choose from; however, when extended by folding the rear seats forward, the floor is not quite flat. The interior is quite nicely finished and has a good variety of storage options for small items.

Price, economy, practicality are what Nissan says buyers in this market want. The new Note offers all three successfully; amongst little features are a plastic bonnet for weight-saving, and a rear lamp design that is less air-turbulent, as are the rear wheel arches. They show that designers are using their wits to achieve even that tiny bit more efficiency.



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VERDICT

Overall, the new Nissan Note is a good-value, functional family car.



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