Nissan X-Trail N-Connecta Mild Hybrid

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Robin Roberts (and WheelsWithinWales) road-tests Nissan’s latest X-Trail…

The Nissan X-Trail was one of the first crossover models when unveiled in 2000 and now in its fourth generation as it enters its third decade, it is still one of the best family cars available.

After globally passing seven million sales, today’s British range includes an unusual seven-seat electrified model, which we have tested here in Mild Hybrid form.

It means you don’t have to worry about plugging in and charging as the sophisticated power management system relies on the compact petrol engine to generate electric power so you don’t have range anxiety.

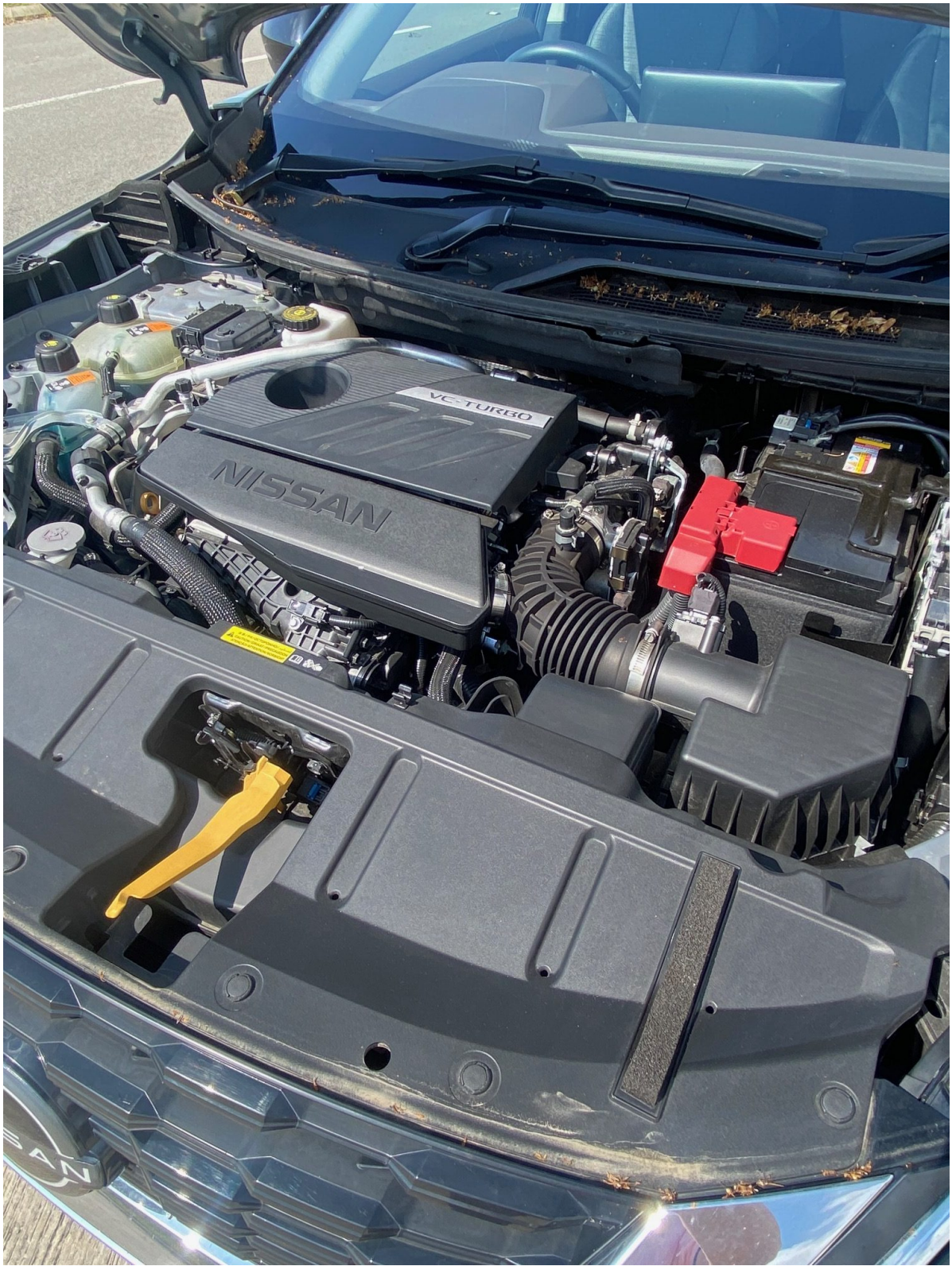
On the road prices for the seven trim models in the range of five or seven seat styles with front or four-wheel drive go from £35,175 to £49,095.


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Nissan has been hedging its bets and offers X Trail with a choice of powertrains, the e-Power petrol generator which powers electric motors at the wheels or the MHEV, which uses the same turbo-petrol 1.5 litre variable compression motor driving the front wheels in the conventional manner, but boosted by a battery giving torque assistance, quick restart and coasting control so the petrol use is minimised.

The system regenerates the lithium-ion battery to run systems when idling in traffic or boosts another 6 Nm (4.43 lb.ft) under acceleration.


VC-TURBO
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It sits on the latest Nissan CMF-C platform used on other models in various sizes and comes with simple but effective Macpherson front struts and rear multi-link suspension, for better predictable handling under any loading situation.

With the new suspension in the fourth generation X-Trail there is also heavily revised power steering with greater feel and responses.

Inside, the driver and passengers have a 12.3-inch NissanConnect touch-screen with very configurable displays to show different settings and information simultaneously if needed or highlight one element instead.

Supporting this is a 10.8-inch head up display with key data projected ahead of the driver for convenience and clarity.

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Google and Amazon systems integrate with these displays as well as mobile phone settings, including voice commands for navigation and other features.

The technology supports over the air updates and real-time traffic advisories and even the latest fuel prices along the way.

It reads road speed signs and has intelligent cruise control for safety and ease of driving, slowing or accelerating as necessary. It even monitors blind spots on the camera system to correct possible dangerous steering turns when lane changing for example.

The three-cylinder engine is surprisingly smooth for its capacity and it pulls reasonably well except when heavily loaded but the transmission is always smooth whether accelerating or slowing down. Despite these virtues, the busy engine note dramatically increased with the revs and at times sounded quite rough.

This intrusive noise was matched by road rumbles and suspension noises although the

system really smoothed out all but the worst potholes and bumps and the deep, well padded and shaped seats were extremely comfortable.

The improved steering feel did not suffer any kickbacks or vibration and the turning circle was good for urban use without being twitchy on open roads.

We liked the power to assistance balance and feedback to the brakes underfoot and the parking brake was highly effective.

Handling felt safe and sure with very modest understeer through flowing corners and no swinging about on tight turns.

Secondary controls on the column were convenient and the wheel's buttons were clearly marked and backed up by additional buttons on the fascia.

You need to study the infotainment system as it contains a lot of features and is advisable to preselect these before a journey if necessary and suitable or they can become distracting to find.

The display is very clear and large, backed up by the smaller head-up visual infront of the driver's eyes, which is very useful and effective.

Heating and ventilation was extremely comprehensive, effective and powerful throughout the large cabin and backed up with powered windows and sunroof.

Oddments spaces were plentiful for a family car and there were convenient ports for phones and devices throughout the cabin, including for the rear pair of seats, which is unusual.

Access and room was great for the front and middle seats as well as the powered tailgate opening for the loadbed but climbing into the rearmost pair of seats was best left to some very bendy children, with very short leg and headroom there.

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Visibility was good all round with slim roof pillars, excellent wipers/ wash both ends, powerful headlights, big mirrors and low waistline. Carefully placed cameras and sensors covered blindspots and worked with the Nissan's inbuilt safety system to warn of objects that might be hidden from the driver's sight.

The X-Trail's intelligent cruise control worked well once a speed was selected to keep a safe distance from anything infront or to the sides.

Using the cruise control on busy roads and not flooring the throttle to boost performance we averaged better than expected economy and consistently saw over 40 mpg and even nudged 50 mpg on one trip. Those figures are a long way above the suggested returns in the Nissan brochure.

Even with the assistance of the electric motor, the Nissan X-Trail N-Connecta is not a quick car but has a respectable performance for country roads and a welcome composure on motorways.

VERDICT

With its latest design and powertrain the Nissan X-Trail is a match for newcomers to the sector and its hybrid technology is very good without being ridiculously expensive. It's a sensible choice for many families.

For: Very roomy infront and middle row, large boot, smooth powertrain, well equipped, comfortable, good visibility.

Against: Cramped third row, some engine and road noises, average performance and economy.


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FAST FACTS

Model: Nissan X-TRAIL N-Connecta MHEV

Price: £38,535 inc two-tone paint

Mechanical: 118 PS 1.5 3 cyl turbo-petrol hybrid, CVT 2WD

Max Speed: 124 mph

0 – 62mph: 9.6 secs

Combined MPG: 42

Insurance Group: 22

C02 emissions: 161

Bik rating: 37%, £670FY, £180SR

Warranty: 3 years/ 60,000 miles

Size: L 4.68 m (15.35 ft), W 2.07 m (6.79 ft), H 1.73 m (5.68 ft)

Bootspace: 575 to 1,752 litres (20.31 to 61.87 cu.ft)

Kerbweight: 1,640 kg (3,616 lb)

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