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Updated Nissan Qashqai – News and Road Test

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The Family Holdall – The latest Nissan Qashqai improved in most areas.

By David Miles (Miles Better News Agency).

The Nissan Qashqai is a C-SUV segment mid-sized 'Crossover' first launched in 2007 and is generally credited with launching the term Crossover. In real terms what does Crossover mean? Well the space of a C-segment family hatchback with the raised ride height and styling of an SUV, and some models also add the seating and load carrying flexibility of an MPV people carrier.



Since the launch of the Qashqai other manufacturers have wasted no time in entering this lucrative market sector which includes the Kia Sportage, Ford Kuga, Volkswagen Tiguan, Peugeot 3008, Vauxhall Grandland X and SEAT Ateca. The Crossover theme has expanded to include smaller B-segment models like the Nissan Juke, Peugeot 2008, Renault Captur and Citroën C3 Aircross. Continuing the SUV/Crossover styling we also have D-segment larger SUV/Crossover types such as the new Peugeot 5008, Renault Koleos and Kia Sorento to name just a few.

The second generation Qashqai was introduced in 2014 with the same SUV/Crossover theme, but was a shade larger for even more space. Now we have it with its mid-life improvements, including better equipment, more driving safety features, uprated handling, improved ride qualities and the introduction of a new top of the range Tekna+ grade to broaden its appeal. Whereas the original Qashqai offered five and seven seat options and 2WD and 4WD models, today's models are all five seaters and most versions are 2WD. Those Nissan owners wanting seven seats must move upwards to the new Nissan X-Trail which has become more Crossover than hardcore SUV.



Since its original launch over 2.8 million Qashqais have been sold to 100 global markets and most are built in the UK at the brand's Sunderland plant. It is the best-selling vehicle built in Britain and its top five markets in Europe are the UK, Russia, Italy, Germany and Spain. It is currently Europe's best selling Crossover of its size. In the UK it is currently the fourth best selling new car overall with 57,120 registrations behind the top selling Ford Fiesta, VW Golf and Ford Focus. Last year it sold 62,682 units in the UK, finishing the year in fifth place in the UK new car top ten sales charts, the only Crossover/SUV to appear in the top ten.

Prices for the updated and refreshed Qashqai start from £19,295 and rise to £32,530 through a 16 variant model range. Engine options available from the Renault-Nissan Alliance, depending upon the specification level chosen, are 1.2 DIG-T 115 hp and 1.6 DIG-T 163 hp turbocharged petrol units and the turbodiesel options are 1.5 dCi 110 and 1.6 dCi 130 units. All have six-speed manual gearboxes as standard but there is the option of a CVT



Xtronic auto transmission with the 115 hp petrol and 130 hp turbodiesel units, again depending on the specification choice. 4WD is also available with the 1.6 dCi 130 hp turbodiesel engine, all other models are 2WD. Specification choices are Visia, Acenta, N-Connecta, Tekna and the new Teckna+.

The likely most popular model will be the 1.5 dCi 110 2WD manual with N-Connecta specification priced at £25,555 and that was the model I tried. If diesel is a no-no then the 1.2 DIG-T 115 hp petrol manual, 2WD with the same spec costs £23,805 which is a saving of £1,750. However the diesel will cost less to run with a Combined Cycle figure of 74.3 mpg and CO2 emissions of only 99 g/km so VED road tax is £120 First Year rate and then Standard rate of £140. Company car drivers will pay 21% Benefit-in-Kind tax and insurance is Group 15. By comparison the 1.2 petrol has a Combined Cycle figure of 50.4 mpg, CO2 is 129 g/km, VED is £160 and then £140, BiK tax is 24% and insurance is Group 14E. All models are covered by a three years/60,000 mile warranty.

All versions have gained styling tweaks for this mid-life refresh, with a V-Motion front grille which is the new Nissan face, angular headlights, smart LED running lights and revised LED tail-light units which wrap around the corners and on to the tailgate. There are the usual plastic protection strips under the bumpers, along the sills, over the wheelarches and roof rails, enhancing the elevated SUV look.

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Inside there is a more upmarket look and feel, with grained soft touch vinyl trim mixed with glossy black inserts - and the fit and finish looks first class. The fascia panel has a twin cockpit design and the touchscreen is centrally positioned with other most used controls beneath it. Right in front of the driver is a cowled instrument panel with dials separated by a trip computer. The seats are comfortable giving really good support and there is enough rear seat legroom for a growing family, although it's not the roomiest in its class in this area. Behind the folding rear seat backs is a 430 litre (15.19 cu.ft) boot which expands to 1,585 litres (55.97 cu.ft) with extra storage under the load floor, and for added ease of use



the floor is the same height as the rear sill for the easy loading of luggage.

All models come with Bluetooth connectivity, LED daytime running lights, cruise control, air-con and electrically operated windows and door mirrors. The N-Connecta spec level of my test car adds equipment such as larger 18-inch alloy wheels, Nissan Connect seven-inch touchscreen with sat-nav and smartphone apps and climate control. It also has the Smart Vision Pack as standard and that includes traffic sign recognition, high beam assist, lane departure warning, intelligent and emergency braking functions – which are some of the major improvements given to this grade of Qashqai during the recent refresh. Unfortunately Apple CarPlay and Android Auto functions are not available so Bluetooth is needed for music streaming whilst the smartphone apps give access to such things as Facebook, TripAdvisor and Google Search. The sat-nav system, whilst it does the job, is not the latest in terms of ease-of-use or indeed its speed.

Other improvements include tuned suspension for better ride comfort – which is now very good, sharper handling and a better feel from the steering. The noise intrusion into the cabin has also been noticeably reduced. All-in-all the changes are significant to the overall improvements throughout the vehicle, which maintains its position as the benchmark range in the ever expanding mid-sized SUV/Crossover sales sector.

Which engine is chosen will be down to price, and the arguments now for petrol versus diesel – whilst factoring in running costs depending upon the mileage to be covered. Whilst the Qashqai is a popular retail sales car it attracts a significant number of fleet and business users, which still means the choice for them will be a diesel engine. It really is a car for all reasons in its sector whether it's family transport, business or lifestyle use for younger and older users. It crosses lots of boundaries and meets a wide choice of needs.

My test car had the 1.5 litre dCi 110 hp turbodiesel engine, just about the best selling unit, but there is a definite move to small petrol engines so it's a toss-up depending on the job in hand as to which one to go for.



This 1.5 dCi 110 hp unit isn't exactly new but it stakes a competitive claim for sales because of its low CO2 emissions of just 99 g/km so VED road tax is low and fuel economy high at an official 74.3 mpg. In real-life driving conditions 60 mpg was regularly recorded with relative ease for long runs using a mixture of roads but some fast motorway cruising and some urban travel reduced my test drive overall figure to 52.8 mpg which for a vehicle of this size I think is acceptable. Key to its official low emissions and good fuel economy are the high fifth and sixth gear ratios. With 260 Nm (192 lb.ft) of torque available from 1,750 rpm this means the tall gearing requires considerable use of the gearbox when driving on winding country roads, with sixth gear only in its happy zone at cruising speeds. Overtaking slower traffic requires changing down at least one gear, probably two depending on your speed, but at least the gearchange is smooth and precise.

VERDICT

The latest Nissan Qashqai has a broad range of model options at competitive prices and so appeals to a broad range of customers so no wonder it's such a popular vehicle. I see loads of them on our roads, they seem to be the go-to vehicle for many users, which is good for British jobs - but owning one limits that exclusivity factor.

For: THE benchmark mid-sized SUV/Crossover by which others are compared, British-built, much improved ride comfort, better handling, improved safety driving features, a versatile, classy, capable and practical family car.

Against: Not as roomy as some for rear seat legroom, no must-have for some Apple CarPlay or Android Auto connectivity functions, dated touchscreen/sat-nav functionality, didn't get close to the official Combined Cycle fuel economy figure.



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

Nissan Qashqai N-Connecta 1.5 dCi 110 2WD manual.

Price: £25,555.

Engine/transmission: 1.5 litre, four cylinder turbodiesel, 110 hp, 260 Nm (192 lb.ft) of torque from 1,750 rpm, six speed manual, 2WD.



Performance: 113 mph, 0-62mph 11.9 seconds.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 74.3 mpg (52.8 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 99 g/km, VED road tax £120/£140, BiK company car tax 21%.

Insurance Group: 15E.

Warranty: Three years/60,000 miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,394 mm (14.42 ft), W 1,806 mm (5.93 ft), H 1,590 mm (5.22 ft), boot/load space 430/1,598 litres (15.19/56.43 cu.ft), braked towing weight 1,350 kg (2,976 lb), five doors/five seats.