Upgraded Nissan LEAF – Road Test

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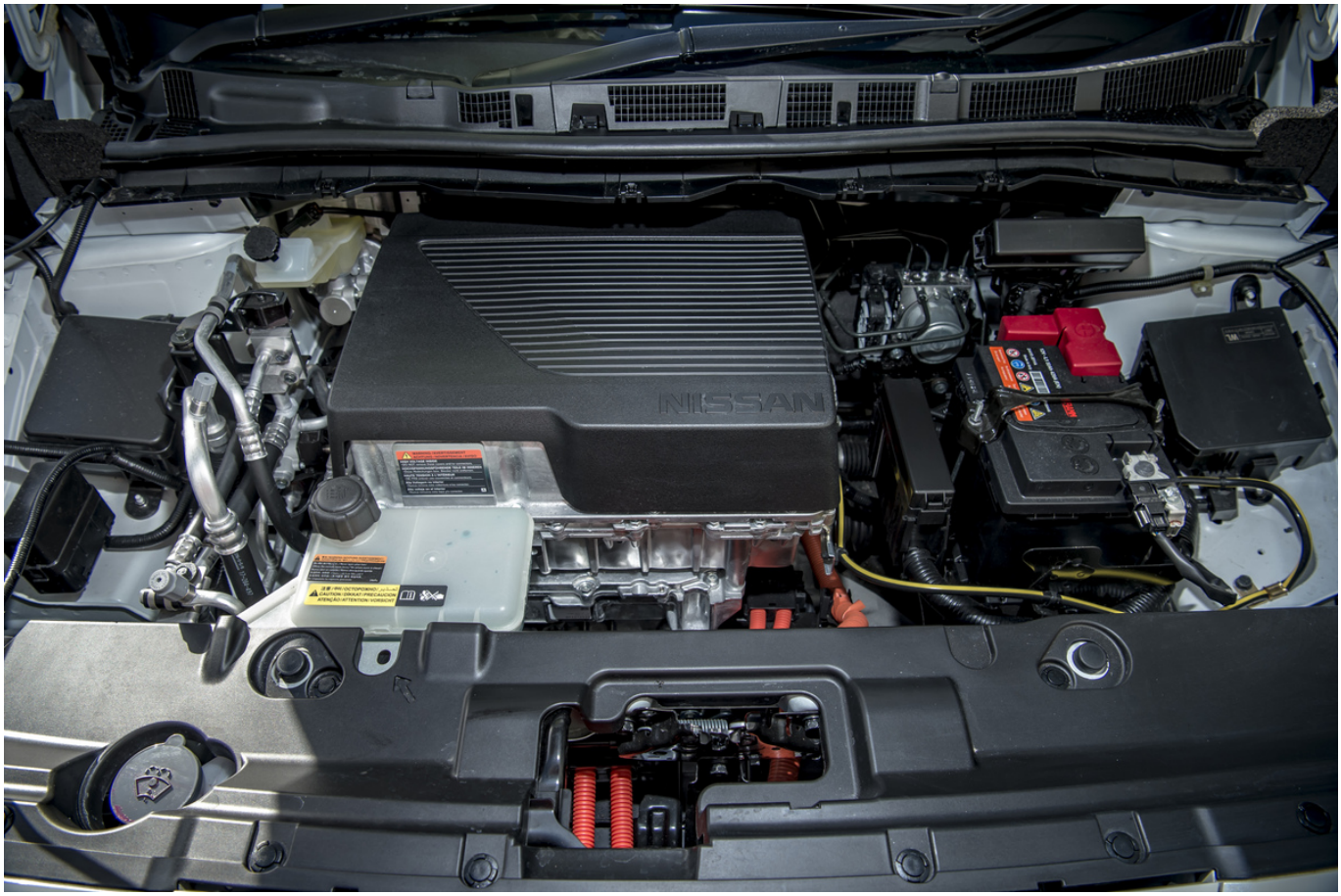
Robin Roberts (and Miles Better Media Agency) connects with the latest Nissan LEAF.

It was the first and for some it's still the best modern electric car you can buy in Britain

The Nissan Leaf is the world's best selling electric passenger car and a benchmark for newer rivals, a genuine five-seater with a good practical range over 200 miles and comes with a sensible choice of domestic or fast charger cables. The car is 'all-electric' and its motor is shown below:



Leaf model year 2021 is sold in Britain in three grades, Acenta, N-Connecta and Tekna with power outputs of 150 hp or the 217 hp we tested. Prices range from £27,345 to £37,710. This means some top spec Leaf versions are no longer eligible for the Government's revised PiCG plug-in car grant which has seen the price ceiling fall from £50k to £35,000 and the grant fall from £3k to £2,500. Many manufactures in recent days have been adjusting their prices for high spec electric versions so they qualify for the new rates.

Upgraded over the first generation, the latest Nissan Leaf has very good acceleration from rest and by judicious use of the e-nergy button on the mode selection lever it gives brisk overtaking or long-legged main road cruising with the 160 kW motor of the test car, but the button also acts as a strong retardation aid and will bring the car to a halt without using the brakes and even holds on a hill.

Motorways quickly drain any electric car so a mixture of main roads and B-roads is better and slows the natural depletion of the battery charge. Acceleration and braking is very good in the Leaf with particularly strong retardation possible, but I found the electric steering a bit dull, although the turning circle was fair and it did not suffer any kickbacks over bad roads.

Front struts and a rear beam axle gave a good ride and loading capability if not a sporting feedback, although it gripped reasonably well and had no vices in the handling department even though it was unexciting.

The front seats were well shaped, adjusted easily and were comfortable but the rear bench for three lacked location and support. On our grade the seats and steering wheel rim were

heated.

While the suspension absorbed most bumps without jarring the cabin, there were a lot of noises from their linkages, 17-inch wheels and tyres. They probably seemed higher because of the very low level of electric motor noise and absence of other mechanical or wind noises.

For the driver, all controls came immediately to hand and there are plenty to select on the wheel spokes, the column, spread over the central console, along the fascia or hidden in the eight-inch touchscreen infotainment display.

The display infront of the driver is a changeable seven-inch combimeter as Nissan call it and that’s very clear to read and straightforward to select contents for essential functions and information.

The tunnel console included the gear selector and e-nergy button along with the parking brake and they all worked very well.

This slideshow requires JavaScript.

There’s plenty of oddments space for a family throughout the cabin and while the bootspace may not be big when all seats are used it can gradually increase as the 60/40 split back seats are folded, but not completely flat, and it has a very good total capacity when two-up.

Visibility was very good around the Leaf, with big powered windows, parking sensors, radar warning and auto-braking in traffic, good auto-wipers and bright intelligent headlights.

Recharging the Leaf was simple. A small flap ahead of the bonnet opened and you have a choice of slow or fast charge point and fairly long cables are stowed in boot-bags. Then it’s plug and glow for however long you need to recharge.

We tested the Leaf over a variety of roads and in different traffic conditions and found the range to be just over 200 miles after each charge.

That's a really useful range for most when you think the typical commute is actually about 26 miles and the number and location of charging points increases each month. Although the Government intends to boost the network and simplify charging, it's still cheaper and more convenient to charge at home if you can and use mobile apps to find available charging points if you have a longer journey to do.

VERDICT

The Nissan Leaf today is a vast performance improvement over the original and its styling

and equipment is comparable to any EV or ICE rivals, but it also beats most of them with its practicality as a family car and that includes its range between recharges.

For: Very smooth all electric powertrain, good performance, well equipped, strong brakes, supportive front seats, roomy for five, zero road tax costs, almost zero company car tax.

Against: Some constant road noise, small boot five up, dead feel steering, flat back-seats lacked support, this high spec version is not eligible for the £2,500 plug-in car grant.

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

2021 Nissan LEAF e-Tekna.

Price: £37,710. Currently not eligible for the Government's downgraded PiCG plug-in car grant of £2,500 for vehicles costing less than £35,000.

Mechanical: 217 hp/160 kW motor, 340 Nm (251 lb.ft) @ 500-4000 rpm, 62 kWh battery, automatic transmission, front wheel drive.

Performance: 98 mph, 0 – 62 mph 6.9-seconds.

Driving Range: 204 miles on test, 1 hour to 11.30 hours charging time depending on charging source.

Emissions and taxation: CO2 emissions 0 g/km.

Tax costs: VED £0 rate, BiK company car tax 1%.

Insurance Group: 21.

Warranty: 3 years mechanical/8 years battery/100,000 miles.

Size: L 4.49 m (14.73 ft), W 2.03 m (6.66 ft), H 1.55 m (5.09 ft).

Boot space: 385 to 1,161 litres (13.60 to 41.00 cu.ft).

Additional News just received.

The Nissan LEAF for Britain and Europe is built in the company's Sunderland plant.

In March 2021 production passed 195,380 with a streamlined assembly time of just ten hours for each LEAF model. It is the forerunner of many more electric Nissan models including commercial vehicles by the early 2030s.

With pioneering qualities built on earlier Nissan EVs since 1946 the Leaf was launched to the world at the end of 2010 and the first generation lasted until 2017. Since 2011 and the first model's 73 miles range a lot of new technology has been incorporated, the battery enlarged and despite the car being heavier and better equipped the range is now over 200 miles.