

tunit[®] diesel performance

NISSAN X-TRAIL

by Tunit



Since its debut in late 2001, Nissan's X-Trail compact SUV has won countless awards. It's been What Car's? 'Best Compact 4x4' for the past two years and this year it beat the Kia Sorrento to take the coveted title of 'Best Used 4x4'.

And it's not hard to see why it consistently rings the bell with the judges. There's ample space for five adults and their luggage, and the interior is full of thoughtful touches. Unless you need to carry seven, it makes you question the need for an MPV - and there's the bonus of four-wheel-drive if you want it.

But unlike one or two other award-winners I could mention, people actually buy them, too. Indeed, the X-Trail has proved to be one of the fastest selling 4x4s on the market.



More particularly, it's popular as a towing vehicle - caravanners love them.

One such is Keith Murray of Salford, Greater Manchester, who tows a 1300kg 'van. Some six months ago, he felt like a change from his worthy VW Passat. Being semi-retired and with more frequent caravan jaunts beckoning, he decided that a diesel 4x4 would make very good sense. Wet fields aren't the easiest of places to negotiate with power going down through only two wheels.

After much desk research and any number of test drives, he plumped for a six-month old X-Trail Sport 2.2dCi. (The Sport's no longer available as such, but the Columbia model comes closest - and at £21,395 new, the price hasn't changed.)

He was impressed, he told me, by the feeling of solidity and the X-Trail's almost car-like handling, plus the likely benefits of Nissan's fast-responding, electronically controlled 'All Mode' four-wheel-drive system.

A rotary, dash-mounted control offers the driver the choice of three basic settings. The first is front-wheel-drive only, for town work. Next comes 'Auto', which apportions torque to each axle - ranging from 100% front to 43% rear, virtually instantly - based on feedback from a number of sensors. In the third setting, 'Lock', the centre clutch divides drive 57/43 front/rear

for serious off-road use and extreme conditions like snow or mud. (When the going gets easier, the system automatically drops back into 'Auto'.) He liked the generous levels of standard equipment; especially, with touring in mind, the cruise control and power sockets front & rear. (The long list also includes a huge tilt/slide electric glass sunroof, 17-inch alloys, six CD auto-changer, power windows front and rear, electric heated/folding door mirrors, climate control, roof rails and steering wheel mounted audio controls.)

Up front, the 2.2-litre turbo-diesel unit incorporates the latest generation common rail technology, high-pressure fuel injectors, a variable nozzle turbocharger and intercooler. It's admirably quiet and has enough muscle for brisk overtaking.

According to the published Nissan data it generates 136bhp at 4,000rpm and 231lb ft of torque at 2,000rpm but, as we were to discover, that wasn't actually the case.

Even so, mated to a six-speed 'box with well-spaced ratios, there's enough power available to take some 2,000kg gross vehicle weight to 62mph in 11.5 seconds, whilst still returning a respectable 37.2mpg on the government's combined cycle.

That's fine in general use, but when it came to towing his caravan, Mr Murray felt the need for



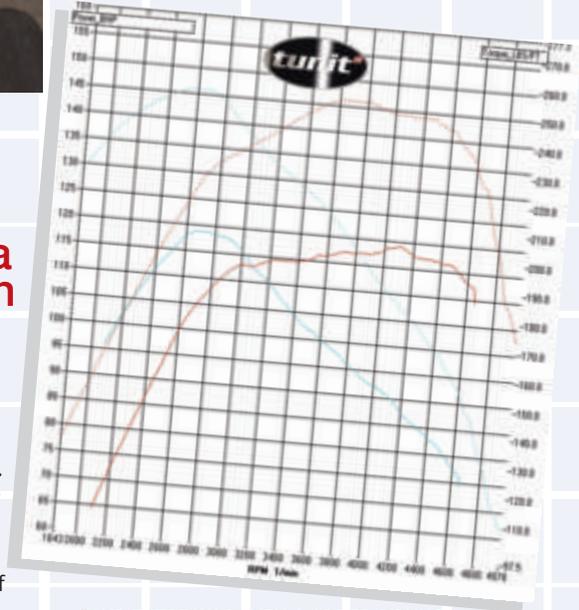
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"It was like a totally different vehicle. Pick-up was better, there was instant response when accelerating and there were no 'flat spots'. And there was a bonus. He'd done a fuel check and his previous 28/29mpg when towing was now 31mpg."

more get-up-and-go, most noticeably when pulling away from junctions and traffic lights. This set him looking at the various 'tuning' companies. He finally opted for Tunit, not least because it doesn't interfere with the manufacturer's warranty and Tunit themselves offer a three-year warranty. Once set up on Tunit's dynamometer - of which there are only two in the country, I believe - the best the X-Trail could record was 119.1bhp and 203lb ft. of torque. That's against Nissan's figures of 136 and 231, remember. (It's worth

mentioning, by the way, that the test rig is accurate to under 1%) The Tunit technicians got to work and some 20 minutes later we were ready to roll again. After three runs and a little lap-top tweaking by Michael Bromley, the Tunit MD, we were looking at 146.2bhp and 252.1lb ft. - an improvement of nearly 23 per cent in term of bhp and 25 per cent extra torque. Out onto the road we went, with Mr Murray eager to try out his 'new' X-Trail. I don't think I've ever heard the word "amazing"



"AND THERE WAS EVEN A ADDED BONUS ON TOP OF THE EXTRA POWER AND ENOUGH TORQUE TO TOW THE QEII. HE'D DONE A FUEL CHECK AND HIS PREVIOUS 28/29MPG WHEN TOWING WAS NOW 31MPG."



Power was down on factory settings so results were even better!



The X-trail is well-liked by families and caravan towers alike! No wonder it sells so well!