

# Pathfinder Hybrid truly a premium product

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the line with enough power to chirp the tires, even though, as tested here in Platinum Premium trim, it weighs in at roughly 128 kg heavier than a comparably equipped regular Pathfinder.

The tow rating of 1,589 kg (3,500 lb) is less than the V6's rating of 2268 kg (5,000 lb).

The Pathfinder Hybrid blends the gasoline engine and electric motor power through Nissan's Intelligent Dual Clutch System and then streams that power through a latest-generation Xtronic CVT (Continuously Variable Transmission).

While front-wheel drive versions are available in the larger U.S. market, Nissan Canada has pared the hybrid choice down to two trim levels - the mid-range SV and a top-of-the-line Platinum Premium model, both coming standard with the Nissan All-Mode 4X4-i system that allows drivers to select from a choice of 2WD/AUTO/4WD lock modes.

According to Transport Canada numbers, the net result is an optimistic 7.8/7.1L/100km (city/hwy) fuel economy rating. And Nissan Canada boasts a 22 percent saving in fuel economy over the normal V6, along with a potential 1,000km range from the same-size 73-litre gas tank.

Nissan designers and engineers emphasized that they were determined not to make design compromises because of the hybrid system, so the compact battery pack fits under the third row seats without affecting passenger room or luggage space. But the compromise here might be the hybrid system itself.

Under optimum conditions the gasoline engine will shut down almost as

soon as you ease off the throttle and the tachometer will continue to register zero revs as you sit at the intersection waiting for the green light. You might even maintain some EV coasting with a feather-light touch of the gas pedal.

Unfortunately, the Idle Stop feature does not work if you use the HVAC system which seems surprising given Canada's freeze-or-fry seasonal climate extremes. If you're heating the car in winter, or cooling it in summer, the gasoline engine idles constantly like any other gasoline engine.

Given the upscale model positioning of the Pathfinder Hybrid trim choices that might not bother premium SUV customers because it eliminates the occasionally clunky transitions of the engine shutting down and coming on-stream again.

But it makes the electrically underpowered hybrid system seem like a half-hearted effort.

My mileage over the course of more than 1,000 km averaged around 10L/100km (comb).

Your mileage may vary, as they say, but I doubt it will be any better because I was shooting for the best results possible, running without HVAC regardless of the weather, coasting at the first hint of a distant stoplight change and not inching forward in stop-and-go traffic. Just, in general, tiptoeing around town.

The Pathfinder Hybrid is truly a premium product with all the bells and whistles, and with amenities comparable to any luxury SUV.

But my inclination would be to save the \$4,000 premium in favour of a non-hybrid Pathfinder.

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