

Nissan banking on another home run with Murano

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NissanConnect with Navigation and Mobile Apps, and eight-inch colour display with multi-touch control.

Optionally available are: Around View Monitor, eight-way power driver's seat with power lumbar support, SiriusXM Satellite Radio (SiriusXM subscription required, sold separately), iPod interface, and 11-speaker Bose premium audio system.

A power liftgate is standard on all but the base model.

Another major change involves pricing that starts at \$29,998, which is a \$4,500 reduction over the base 2014 Murano S. That reduced pricing applies across the board for 2015.

The all-new 2015 Murano is offered in five models with starting prices at: S FWD, \$29,998; SV FWD, \$32,998; SV AWD, \$34,998; SL AWD, \$38,398 and Platinum AWD, \$43,498.

Besides the all-round camera, Murano offers a full suite of safety technology including Blind Spot Warning (BSW), Predictive Forward Collision Warning (PFCW) and Forward Emergency Braking (FEB).

Also available is Nissan's new Cross Traffic Alert (CTA) system which utilizes radar sensors to help warn you of a moving vehicle or person you may not see approaching from either side.

Nissan claims best in class rear cargo volume (behind the second row) of 1,979 litres (69.6 cu ft) with the seats down, 1,121 litres (108.1 cu ft) seats up.

All 2015 Muranos are equipped with a standard 3.5-litre DOHC V6 with 260 hp and 240 lb/ft of torque teamed with Nissan's Xtronic CVT transmission.

The Xtronic includes an updated D-step Logic Control with the ability to simulate shifts. The result is a more natural acceleration feeling without holding a high rpm constant.

Offered once again is front-wheel-drive. In its first year of production there was a Murano FWD model, but it was soon dropped due to sluggish sales. FWD is found on the bottom two of the five trim levels, all-wheel-drive on the other five.

Fuel economy for the FWD is 11.0/8.2/9.8L/100 km city, highway/combined and for the AWD, 11.2/8.3/9.9L/100 km.

Helping to improve fuel economy, the 2015 version of the Murano is 66 kg (146) lb lighter with low rolling resistance tires

and a front grille shutter and underbody panels to increase lower air flow, resulting in a drag coefficient of 0.31 which is the best in the segment.

Handling and steering have also been addressed with the use of new rebound springs and more rigid stabilizer bars. Along with a quicker steering ratio, there is a reduced steering angle the benefit of which is a tighter turning radius.

The Murano is wonderful to drive, which I did for the better part of day in my favourite part of the word, Napa-Bodega California.

Despite driving rain, the Murano drove and felt more like a luxury CUV with Nissan making no bones about it seeing the Lexus RX as a main competitor.

North of Bodega Bay is Goat Island State Park that is reached by probably the most twisty section of the famous Pacific Coast Highway.

No wider than a double car driveway, being nimble and swift to react is crucial and the Murano tracked like a sportscar, never mind a mid-size CUV.

My co-driver left his acid stomach medication at home so we went to Costco (he buys in bulk) just as the store opened.

I was thankful for not just the backup camera, but also the cross traffic alert because there were shoppers running at full clip, oblivious to me backing up, just to get in the door.

The 2015 Murano joins the Pathfinder, Rogue, Juke, Xterra and Armada at the head of Nissan's fleet of CUV/SUVs as Nissan bolsters its already diverse fleet.

With Murano, Nissan is banking on hitting another home run like it did in 2003 with the tagline for the 2015 being, "A game changer once again".

(Nissan Murano 2015 as a glance)

BODY STYLE: Mid-size, entry-level luxury CUV.

DRIVE METHOD: front-engine, front-/all-wheel-drive, CVT transmission

ENGINE: 3.5-litre, DOHC V6 (260 hp, 24 lb/ft)

FUEL ECONOMY: (Regular) FWD, 11.0/8.2/9.8L/100 km city, highway/combined; AWD, 11.2/8.3/9.9L/100 km.

CARGO: (behind the second row) of 1,979 litres (69.6 cu ft) with the seats down, 1,121 litres (108.1 cu ft) seats up.

TOW RATING: 680 kg

PRICE: S FWD, \$29,998; SV FWD, \$32,998; SV AWD, \$34,998; SL AWD, \$38,398 and Platinum AWD, \$43,498.

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LEASE PAYMENTS INCLUDE FREIGHT AND PDI.



Limited time weekly lease offers available through Honda Financial Services Inc. (HFS), to qualified retail customers on approved credit. Weekly payment includes freight and PDI (ranges from \$1,495 to \$1,695 depending on model), EHF tires (\$28.45), EHF filters (ranges from \$1.00 to \$1.55 depending on model), A/C levy (\$100 except Civic DX & Fit DX models), and OMVIC fee (\$5). Taxes, license, insurance and registration are extra. Representative weekly lease example: 2015 Civic DX Sedan // 2015 CR-V LX 2WD // 2015 Fit DX 6MT on a 60 month term with 260 weekly payments at 2.99% // 1.99% // 2.99% lease APR. Weekly payment is \$44.90 // \$69.90 // \$39.98 with \$0 down or equivalent trade-in and \$600 // \$400 // \$875 total lease incentive included. Down payments, \$0 security deposit and first weekly payment due at lease inception. Total lease obligation is \$11,675.15 // \$18,173.41 // \$10,393.68. 120,000 kilometre allowance; charge of \$0.12/km for excess kilometres. PPSSA lien registration fee of \$45.93 and lien registering agent's fee of \$5.65, due at time of delivery are not included. *\$500 Holiday Bonus offer can be combined with advertised lease and finance rates and applies to retail customer purchase or lease agreements for new 2014/2015 Civic models and 2014/2015 CR-V models concluded between December 2nd, 2014 and January 2nd, 2015 at participating Ontario Honda Dealers. For all offers: license, insurance, other taxes (including HST) and excess wear and tear are extra. Taxes payable on full amount of purchase price. Offers only valid for Ontario residents at Ontario Honda Dealers. Dealer may lease for less. Dealer order/trade may be necessary. Vehicles and accessories are for illustration purposes only. Offers, prices and features subject to change without notice. See your Ontario Honda Dealer or visit HondaOntario.com for full details. **Based on Association of International Automobile Manufacturers of Canada (AIAMC) data reflecting sales between 1997 and December 2013. *Estimated fuel economy based on Government of Canada's new 5-cycle testing method. Your actual fuel consumption will vary based on driving habits and other factors - use for comparison only. For more information on 5-cycle testing, visit <http://www.nrca.gc.ca/energy/efficiency/transportation/cars-light-trucks/buying/7491>.