

Weekend driving event puts Nissan's compact crossover to the test

By THE EDITORS
Carguide Magazine

Six Southern Ontario couples representative of the new Nissan Rogue's target market experienced what professional auto writers take for granted recently, when they were invited to drive the compact crossover and give their impressions of it.

Their 'Rogue Weekend' began with an advanced driving course at the PMG Technologies skidpad near Montréal, and concluded with an extensive two-day test drive to Ottawa over a variety of back roads and highways in real winter conditions.

It began to snow as the group arrived PMG Technologies where they were met by professional racing driver-turned-instructor, Guy Lahaie of Trois Rivieres, Quebec.

Lahaie's mission: To teach the group advanced driving skills with the focus on skid control, proper use of the anti-lock braking system, and collision avoidance techniques.

As the snowfall intensified, the drivers took turns through the various courses and with each consecutive pass, their confidence and skill levels rose.

From Blaineville, the group motored to Chateau Montebello where they anticipated a challenging drive to Ottawa the next morning through spectacular Laurentian Mountains scenery.

Impressions

Sean Kavanaugh of Burlington liked the steering wheel's wide range of position settings, large print and easily identifiable switches and controls, while his wife, Allison, especially liked the heated seats and seatbacks.

Six-foot-tall Ally Isted, also of Burlington, found entering and exiting the vehicle "extremely

easy."

Everything important was easily within reach for Eva Choe of Toronto, who liked the seat warmers and the large, round knobs for the heating and air conditioning.

Jeff Chan of Hamilton offered kudos for "great seats and height adjustments on the non-powered front seat in his tester."

For Frank Verrilli of Toronto: "The radio controls in the steering wheel make it easier for the single driver, as well as safer."

"We purposely drove over bumps to get a feel for the ride comfort level, said Ally Isted, "and the bumps felt almost non-existent."

All around visibility was "quite good" said Mat Rodriguez, though the view directly rearward was restricted by the "smallish back window," a point noted by more than half of the drivers.

Tammy Chan found the brakes quick to respond, and weren't too touchy. "The steering wheel felt like a true extension of my arms," she said.

Said hubby Jeff, "the ride is slightly stiff, but I'll take that over a tall vehicle that wants to lean in the corners."

The Vehicle Dynamic Control "made a huge difference" during the car control exercises, said Monika Bujalska of Toronto. Even through slalom cones on snow and ice, "the vehicle responds remarkably to steering commands."

Oscar Valencia, who moved to Canada from Columbia nine years ago, noted that a big part of driving in Canada "is doing it in snowy conditions, and this car responded perfectly."

"When I slammed on the brakes, I was still in control and was able to steer where I wanted to go," said Allison Kavanaugh.

The continuously-variable transmission was a

unanimous hit. "Totally seamless and extremely smooth," pronounced Oscar Valencia. "I'm sold," said Jeff Chan.

Tammy Chan found back seat room "nice and tall with lots of leg room. "We could easily load up our kids and their three hockey bags."

Lanky Paul Constantin of Burlington found "plenty of foot room" under the front seats. "The spare tire is in a convenient place (under the cargo floor) and the bolt that holds it on can't get rusty (in that location)."

Several drivers noted that the front passenger seatback flipped forward a tad too forcefully when unlatched.

In the end, the Rogue received high

marks all around, with 75 per cent of the drivers saying it exceeded their expectations, and the remaining quarter saying it met theirs.

Thirty-three per cent (four drivers) rated the Rogue as "excellent" value for money and 50 per cent viewed it as "above average." Two drivers called it "good" value.

Not only did Rogue exceed Ally Isted's expectations, especially when considering the price range in which it competes, "it also proved to me that Nissan can build a vehicle that has high appeal for women drivers" as well as for men.

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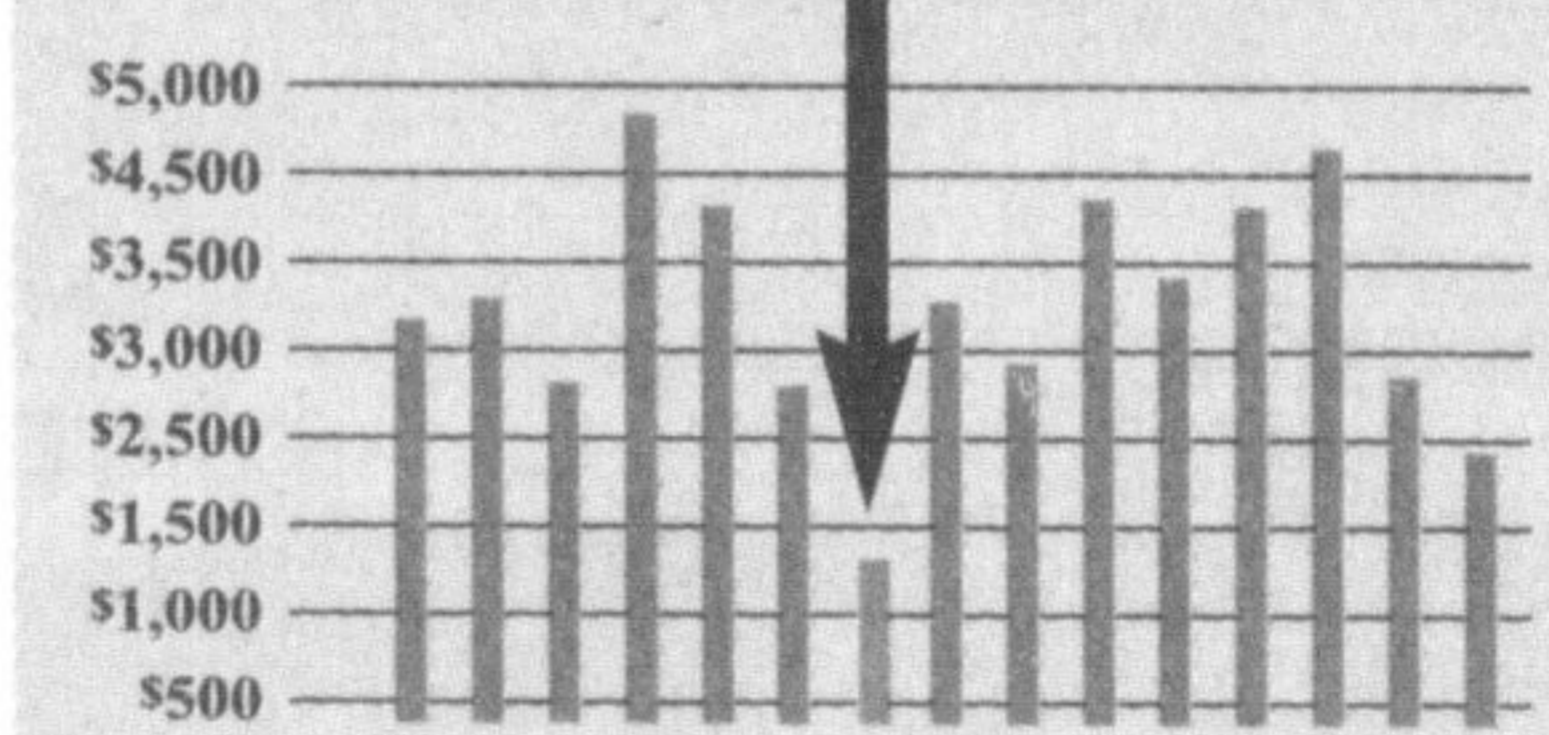
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Nissan's new Rogue crossover replaces the successful, but boxy X-Trail. The Rogue boasts slippery lines, a wide track, aggressive silhouette and powerful rear shoulder lines.

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