

WHEELS

# Nissan Quest has the rugged mechanics of the Frontier and the speed and handling of the Maxima

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While it looks the same as when introduced, the 1999 version of the Nissan Quest minivan has quite a lot going on underneath.

New features include additional cargo room, more power, antilock brakes as a standard and a sliding panel door on the driver's side.

What it retains is the car-like ride and a patented, flexible seating system that creates seats for up to seven.

Ted Kelly, sales manager for Village Nissan said "That it's the combination of comfort and the appeal of a car-like ride and roominess for seven that makes it such a desirable vehicle. You

get the best of both worlds."

Nissan said the exterior is all new, except for the revised nose. It is 4.6 inches longer and 1.2 inches wider, which results in 9.6 more cubic feet of cargo space for a total of 135.6 cu. ft.

On the inside, much is changed and much is the same. That means a lot of switchgear and controls found in the current Maxima and Infiniti I30 can be employed.

But something quite new for all of us who have struggled with keeping our stuff from rolling around in the back is a patented, three-position rear cargo shelf that can be used to keep things like a double stroller and a carton of eggs separate. There is also a

power-assisted rack-and-pinion steering.

Retained is the Quest's Trac system that allows the second row of seats to be removed. The third row bench is on two tracks that let it slide forward to create extra rear cargo area or backwards to produce true limousine-like seating and legroom.

I now believe the 1999 Quest holds the record for storage nooks and crannies with a total of 31.

The front-mounted 3.3-litre V6 produces 170 hp and 200 ft/lb of torque. It drives the front wheels through a four-speed automatic transmission with overdrive. Three-channel, four-sensor antilock brakes are standard, as is the

power-assisted rack-and-pinion steering.

For 1999, Quest follows Nissan tradition by offering three trim levels called the GXE, GLE, and the SE.

The GXE is fitted out as standard with power windows and locks, cruise, remote entry, front CFC-free air conditioning, luggage rack, rear window washer and wiper, privacy glass and AM/FM cassette.

The SE puts sporting into the handling with 16-inch wheels and performance tires, revalved shocks and stiffer springs and a rear stabilizer bar. Inside are the same, racy black pointers on white face gauges as found in the Maxima SE, used along with sporty seats, second row captain's chairs and front and rear air conditioning with second row controls.

The GLE lathers in the lux with leather-faced seating that has six-way

adjust for the driver and four-way adjust for the front seat passenger.

As for toys, how about the new two-channel stereo system with headphones to listen to an alternative CD, or a

separate tape of radio program? There is also a six-disc, in-dash changer that lets listeners play CDs on two channels at the same time.

Among the other extras is a HomeLink system that can be programmed to open garage doors, gates, even turn on and off home security systems.

My test Quest was finished in a very bright hue of Italian racing red which certainly added sport character.

Road manners of the Quest are surprisingly above average, and I say surprisingly because the rear suspension is a mono-leaf spring. With the pulling power of the bigger V6, it also steps out nicely from the light and moves up through the gears like a knife through warm butter, such is the quality of the four-speed automatic.

My tester came with four doors and the absolutely huge sliding sunroof peculiar to the Quest and Twin Mercury Villager. There is so much glass up there to let the sun in, the Quest feels more like a Targa-top than a minivan.

The very low liftover coupled with spot light embedded on the inside of the liftgate make loading and unloading at night a breeze. I don't know why those who make other minivans and station wagons don't follow suit.

Because of its limited overhang at both ends, and the generous glass area, the Quest makes driving and handling in tight spots less of a challenge than some other minivans present to their drivers. This should be especially welcomed by those who are shorter in stature and have trouble seeing out the back window when backing up.

All in all, the Nissan Quest continues



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Ted Kelly, sales manager, Village Nissan.

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