

Kicks Checks the Boxes

Smallest Nissan Crossover Makes Logical Sense

By Derek Price

CARGAZING.COM

The latest Nissan Kicks makes a compelling case for people who shop based on logic, not feelings.

Like its big brother, the Rogue, I struggle to register any emotions whatsoever when driving the Kicks. If I dig deep, I can feel a hint of happiness at how stingy it is at burning gas — 31 mpg in the city and 36 on the highway, according to federal fuel wonks — but otherwise am ambivalent about Nissan's triple-little crossover.

It's little in size, with a little engine and little originality.

If I take off my snobby car-critic hat and see it like most buyers do, though, it makes a lot more sense from a logical perspective. The Kicks is about checking boxes, something it does exceptionally well.

It looks good, for starters, with the same basic style as all modern crossovers. It's not particularly innovative or interesting visually, but neither are its competitors. That's perfect for the masses of buyers looking for something that's simply appealing, not necessarily avant-garde cleverness that pushes the boundaries of automotive art.

It checks the "handsome" box.

One of the most logical reasons to buy a new car is for today's safety features,



Nissan's small, affordable Kicks gives buyers the style and flexibility of a crossover with lots of safety features and good fuel economy.

and the Kicks doesn't disappoint there, either, with lots of standard equipment. I'll let Nissan do the honors: "The suite of technologies includes Automatic Emergency Braking with Pedestrian Detection, Blind Spot Warning, Rear Cross Traffic Alert, Lane Departure Warning, Rear Automatic Braking and High Beam Assist."

It checks the "safe" box. Because new cars are

expected to be an extension of one's smart phone, every Kicks comes with Apple CarPlay and Android Auto. The base S grade gets a 7-inch touchscreen, while all others get 8 inches. There are three USB ports inside and the ability to upgrade to a 360-degree parking camera, which Nissan calls the Around View Monitor, on the range-topping SR trim.

It checks the "tech" box. Despite the Kicks' small

size, as the most diminutive vehicle in Nissan's crossover lineup, it feels roomier on the inside. Designers did a magical job maximizing the perception of spaciousness once you step — or more accurately, lower yourself — into the Kicks' cabin. And a lift gate in back makes it easy to load cargo into the 25.3 cubic feet of space for hauling stuff in back.

It checks the "practical" box.

The one glaring thing it lacks, though, is the emotional component, something I realize most of today's buyers — particularly buyers of practical, affordable, family-friendly crossovers — aren't necessarily looking for.

A 1.6-liter, four-cylinder engine makes 122 horsepower, enough to do the job but hardly inspiring. Its fun-sapping continuously variable transmission doesn't do the

WHAT WAS TESTED?

2023 Nissan Kicks SR CVT (\$22,850)

Wheelbase: 103.1 in.

Length: 169.1 in.

Width: 69.3 in.

Height: 63.4 in.

Engine: 1.6-liter four cylinder (122 hp, 114 lbs. ft.)

Transmission:

Continuously variable

Fuel economy: 31 city, 36 highway

Why buy it?

It delivers what most crossover buyers are looking for at a great price. Fuel economy, safety features and technology are all impressive for the money.

driving feel any favors, but it's also a major reason for those smile-inducing fuel-economy numbers.

Fitting with the theme, the Kicks' suspension is tuned more for comfort than thrills. That's a smart choice for a crossover, I think, and makes it impressively pleasant on the highway for such a small vehicle.

Pricing starts at \$20,290 for the base model and ranges up to \$22,850 for the SR. After a moderately long list of options and a \$1,295 destination charge, my tester rang up just under \$28,000.



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It checks the “handsome” box. One of the most logical reasons



The Kicks’ smart cabin layout makes maximum use of the available space. It feels roomier inside than it looks from the outside.

to buy a new car is for today’s safety features, and the Kicks doesn’t disappoint there, either, with lots of standard equipment. I’ll let Nissan do the honors: “The suite of technologies includes Automatic Emergency Braking with Pedestrian Detection, Blind Spot Warning, Rear Cross Traffic Alert, Lane Departure Warning, Rear Automatic Braking and High Beam Assist.”

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A CLOSER LOOK



AT A GLANCE

FACTS, FIGURES AND RATINGS

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