

Nissan's Newest EV

Japanese-Built Electric Crossover Rated Up to 304 Miles of Range

By Derek Price

CARGAZING.COM

Nissan got a head start in electric vehicles when it released the Leaf more than a decade ago.

Now that EVs have transitioned from a tiny niche to more widespread acceptance in America, Nissan is finally giving the Leaf an electric-powered stablemate: a crossover called the Ariya.

Unlike the Leaf, which had very little direct competition when it debuted 12 years ago, the Ariya competes with a slew of electric crossovers that have been unveiled recently. The market exploded from a handful of pricey offerings such as the Tesla Model X to a whole buffet of more affordable choices including the Ford Mustang Mach-E, Hyundai Ioniq 5, Kia EV6, Tesla Model Y, Volkswagen ID.4, Toyota bZ4X and others.

The Ariya responds to this slew of competitors with a different slew of its own. It comes in a dizzying array of drivetrain layouts, battery choices and content levels that let buyers pick the EV that meets their exact needs.

You can get it in front- or all-wheel drive and with two different battery packs: 63 or 87 kWh.

Nissan created a whopping six trim levels called Venture, Engage, Evolve, Empower, Premiere and Platinum with various levels of standard amenities. On



The 2023 Nissan Ariya, an all-new battery-powered crossover, is built on a platform designed exclusively for electric vehicles.

top of that, choices for optional equipment make the Ariya flavors seem endless.

It's no surprise, then, that the maximum rated range can vary widely depending on how you configure it.

At the bottom of the list is the all-wheel-drive Engage model, rated for 205 miles on a full charge. The Venture+ version tops the list with 304 miles of range.

Pricing starts at \$43,190 for the base Engage and tops out at \$60,190 for the Platinum+ with all-wheel drive, which Nissan calls e-4ORCE.

Unfortunately for Nissan, America's turn toward pro-

tectionist politics doesn't bode well for the Ariya, which is built in Japan and does not qualify for federal incentives that encourage American electric-car production.

Its smaller and older cousin, the Leaf, qualifies for a \$7,500 tax credit because it's built in Tennessee and meets other byzantine legal standards. Go figure.

The Ariya's driving experience doesn't stand out compared to most EVs, too. It's reasonably quick and quiet, like all modern electric cars, but isn't as thrilling as the best ones.

On the upside, it's designed exceptionally well

from an aesthetic and functional standpoint.

Built on a new platform specifically for electric propulsion, without any of the compromises needed for fitting a gasoline engine under the hood, the Ariya looks as fresh and sophisticated as any EV for sale today.

This crossover's futuristic, space-age look is eye catching, especially in the cabin, where natural materials and a minimalist design make it one of the best interiors in Nissan's current lineup.

Nissan compares the Ariya's cabin to "a sleek café lounge on a starship," whatever that means. But the overall feel in my mid-level-

trim Ariya tester was cozy, clean and highly functional. A completely flat floor makes the cabin seem spacious, and the seats and storage areas are packaged in a way that creates the illusion of roominess in a somewhat small vehicle.

If I could change one thing about the Ariya, it would be the driving feel. It's just not as engaging and exciting as electric cars can be. It looks the part, sure, but the ho-hum acceleration and soft steering and suspension tuning take away some of its potential for enjoyment.

Nissan knows how to make cars that feel right. The

WHAT WAS TESTED?

2023 Nissan Ariya Empower+ FWD (\$53,690)

Wheelbase: 109.3 in.

Length: 182.9 in.

Width: 74.8 in.

Height: 65.4 in.

Motor: 178 kW (238 horsepower)

Battery: Liquid cooled lithium ion (87 kWh)

Fuel economy: 98 MPG equivalent

Why buy it?

It's a worthy addition to the groundbreaking Leaf electric sedan in Nissan's lineup. The Ariya's family-friendly crossover layout will appeal to a lot of EV shoppers, and its futuristic design turns heads.

GT-R and newest Z are some of the best driver's cars on the planet, and injecting some of that same magic sauce into EVs would make an electric future much more appealing.

As it stands, though, the Ariya is a solid start in the fast-growing EV crossover segment. Uncle Sam's policies are creating headwinds for it, but striking looks and a thoroughly contemporary taste will make some buyers take a close look at Nissan's most daring and impressive EV to date.

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The Ariya's cabin has a modern, minimalist, science-fiction-inspired style that matches its forward-looking body.

figure it.

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A CLOSER LOOK



AT A GLANCE

FACTS, FIGURES AND RATINGS

What was tested? 2023 Nissan Ariya Empower+ FWD (\$53,690).

Options: Premium paint (\$395), carpeted floor mats and first aid kit (\$250), illuminated kick plates (\$485). Price as tested (including \$1,335 destination charge): \$56,155.

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Width: 74.8 in.
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Motor: 178 kW (238 horsepower)
Battery: Liquid cooled lithium ion (87 kWh)
Fuel economy: 98 MPG equivalent

RATINGS
Style: 8
Performance: 6
Price: 4
Handling: 5
Ride: 6
Comfort: 6
Quality: 7
Overall: 7

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