

A Right-Sized Truck

Nissan Frontier Adds 1980s Nostalgia for 2024 Model Year

By Derek Price

CARGAZING.COM

People unhappy with the inflated prices, sizes and fuel consumption of today's full-size trucks are in for some good news.

Now is a great time to be shopping for a mid-size pickup. A slew of new and updated choices hit the market during the pandemic era, including one I'm testing this week, the Nissan Frontier.

There are a lot of things to like about the Frontier after its thorough overhaul two years ago, starting with a smooth and powerful engine.

A 3.8-liter V6 makes 310 horsepower and 281 pound-feet of torque, enough to tow 6,640 pounds with the right equipment. Even more impressive, it pulls like *crème brûlée* when you press the gas pedal and send all that power through an unusually well-sorted nine-speed automatic transmission.

As good as this powertrain is, I wish it wasn't the only choice. It slurps gas as gluttonously as some full-size trucks, with its most efficient two-wheel-drive version rated for 18 mpg in city driving and 24 on the highway. A smaller turbo-charged engine or hybrid would satisfy buyers who think the V6 is overkill.

The Frontier's biggest



A 310-horsepower engine is the only choice in Nissan's mid-size Frontier pickup. It's a powerful, smooth V6 that can pull up to 6,640 pounds.

news for 2024 is its unabashed appeal to nostalgia with the Hardbody Edition. Named for Nissan's iconic 1980s truck, it has 17-inch wheels with a heritage-inspired look, a sport bar in the back, and lots of black trim that evokes the spunky spirit of the 1980s Hardbody. Throwback badges and graphics complete the look.

Also new for 2024 is the SL grade on the Frontier Crew Cab. It replaces the 2023 SV Premium Package and includes a lot of popular upscale equipment, including LED lighting, heated leather seats, 120-

volt outlets and a heated steering wheel.

My tester, though, was the PRO-4X designed for off-road driving. It comes with the typical rugged goodies for surviving a beating on trails including skid plates, Bilstein off-road shocks, all-terrain tires and an electronic locking rear differential.

Despite all that serious off-road kit, the PRO-4X drives more comfortably than most trucks in this brawny category. It's a little noisier and bouncier than the standard Frontier, but not unbearably so. The all-terrain tires definitely

sacrifice some traction on pavement, but the overall tradeoff is not bad for the extra capability you get, including roughly an inch more ground clearance for getting over obstacles.

It comes with today's requisite screens for running infotainment systems, including a 7-inch display behind the steering wheel and an 8- or 9-inch touchscreen on the dash depending on the trim level you pick.

Every Frontier comes with standard Apple CarPlay and Android Auto for connecting smartphones, and the PRO-grade

models add some extras to help justify their premium cost. They add wireless smartphone connections and wireless charging.

While the cabin design and nicely integrated tech features make it look like a car on the inside, it definitely has a heavy, truck-like feel from the driver's seat. Steering takes a little effort, and you can feel the portly heft from its ladder frame at times.

If I could change one other thing about it, in addition to adding a more

efficient engine choice, I'd make the Frontier's back seat a bit roomier. It doesn't feel quite as spacious as some competitors.

As a whole, though, it's a great choice for someone who needs real truck capability and style without the excess of today's full-size pickups.

Pricing starts at \$29,770 for the King Cab S grade and tops out at \$43,940 for the Crew Cab Hardbody Edition. The PRO-4X version I tested starts at \$39,300 before options.

AT A GLANCE

What was tested? 2024 Nissan Frontier PRO-4X Crew Cab 4x4 Automatic (\$39,300). Options: Premium paint (\$395), electronic tailgate lock (\$335), Pro Convenience package (\$2,190), illuminated kick plates (\$295), Pro Premium package (\$2,790), technology package (\$990). Price as tested (including \$1,335 destination charge): \$47,630

By The Numbers

Wheelbase: 139.8 in.
Length: 224.1 in.
Width: 74.7 in.
Height: 72.9 in.
Engine: 3.8-liter V6 (310 hp, 281 ft. lbs.)
Transmission: Nine-speed automatic

Fuel economy: 18 city, 22 highway

RATINGS

Style: 8
Performance: 8
Price: 9
Handling: 5
Ride: 6
Comfort: 7
Quality: 7
Overall: 8

Why buy it? A smooth, powerful V6 and stout frame give the current generation Frontier a lot of capability for a mid-size pickup. The new Hardbody Edition tugs at the heartstrings of people who remember Nissan's 1980s truck.

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The Frontier's biggest news for 2024 is its unabashed appeal to



Like all modern trucks, a touchscreen dominates the center of the Frontier's dash. It runs a large suite of tech features, including an off-road camera view in the PRO-4X.

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A CLOSER LOOK



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FACTS, FIGURES AND RATINGS

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