

# Portland Observer Auto Review

News and reviews on new motor vehicles

## 2009 Nissan Xterra OR-V 4x4

BY KATHLEEN CARR

There's no question the Xterra has enough power. Where previous Xterras offered a small four and relatively under-powered V6, all that is offered now is a 4.0-liter V6 that delivers 265 hp. It has just enough power to be good; too much can be bad.

The V6 is connected to a 5-speed automatic transmission. A 6-speed manual is offered, and if you're really serious about your off-roading you might want to consider it, although we found the 5-speed automatic to be perfectly adequate.

The problem we had with the Xterra was with the seats, they were very uncomfortable seats, and any amount of adjustment didn't seem to be able to ease the discomfort. After my first long ride in the Xterra Now, if you're using the Xterra for off-roading, the seats don't really matter. All you want is something that will hold you in when the vehicle is hitting some serious angles, and the Xterra does this well. There are assist handles at all four doors that can be used to grab on when you're in the wild, or to help getting in. Yes, along with the hard seats, there's a pretty steep climb to get into the Xterra. Something resembling a running board might have helped. But again, the high vehicle height made the Xterra more capable as an off-road vehicle.

To make the off-road experience more enjoyable, the Xterra comes equipped with a 4WD system that includes an electronically controlled transfer case, vehicle dynamic control system, 4-wheel active brake limited slip, hill descent control and hill start assist (both are extremely handy), electronic locking rear differential, a double wishbone suspension and high performance Bilstein shocks. From the off-road experience I've had, all are important to doing a good job.

The cargo area (65.7 cubic feet maximum) has six utility hooks and four adjustable cleats. Rear seats offer stadium seating, and fold flat when you want more cargo than people. It's easy to lower the seats - you pull a lock to move the seat forward, then fold the back down. The rear cargo area is also "easy clean," meaning you can hose it out if you get too much mud and dirt back there.

The Xterra is best served for the adventurous outdoor individual, for everyday use it was a chore to get into. Running boards are a must because of the height. The seats are stiff making it an uncomfortable ride.



Specifications: 4.0 Liter DOHC V6 Engine; 5-speed automatic transmission; 15 city mpg, 20 highway mpg; \$30,200 MSRP

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