

DOUBLE CAB of the year!

Nissan Navara

Regular readers of Caravan and Outdoor Life magazine will have noticed that we have been referring to the Nissan Navara in recent issues as one of the top two bakkies in our recreational market. We are now ready to put our head on the block and nominate this particular model as the Best Double-Cab on the market for 2006!

Why? Well, it's a close call with its nearest rival - the 4-litre Hilux - but what tips the scales with this Spanish-built 4-litre Navara is the total combined package of styling, space, engine power, fuel economy, ride comfort, quietness, finish, and ease of towing a caravan.

In comparison, other double-cabs appear to be commercial vehicles first and foremost, which are then dressed to appeal to the recreational market. The Navara, on

the other hand, comes across as being different, as being designed as an SUV (sports utility vehicle) from the ground up.

Whereas this feeling may be somewhat subjective, the Navara, in my opinion, just has the edge in the body beautiful stakes, and you can take it anywhere and make a statement about your lifestyle and be proud of what you are driving.

SUV interior styling

The interior, too, is car-like in styling: you have all this wonderful space in which to sit back, spread yourself out and enjoy towing the caravan to the other side of the world (if need be), for its powerful, 4-litre, six cylinder petrol engine and five speed automatic transmission takes all the effort and hassle out of towing, be it overtaking slower vehicles, climbing mountain passes, towing into prevailing headwinds or simple straight-line stability on a bumpy road.

**" 198 kW and 385 N.m
of torque "**

On a simple score sheet, you can place a big tick next to the word 'stress-free' towing!

Towing capacity of 3 000 kg

Nissan rate this vehicle capable of towing up to 3 000 kg, though due to South African legislation, it may only tow a caravan with a GVM of up to 1 838 kg with over-run brakes. This weight is based on the Navara's tare weight of 1 838kg.

However, if you fit a vacuum brake or electric brake in addition to the over-run brake on the caravan or trailer, then you can go higher than the 1 838 kg, but in standard trim, the big, tandem-axled Jurgens Exclusive would be well within this vehicle's towing limits.

For this tow test we managed to borrow the biggest caravan we could find at the time - a Gypsy Regal with a GVM of 1 330kg - and recorded a fuel consumption of 18.3 l/100 km over a set distance of 100 km - it's got reasonable

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Besides loads of engine power under the bonnet, the interior is upmarket, with features like Cruise control (on the steering wheel), Anti-dazzle rear view mirror, CD player and ABS brakes.

fuel economy for an engine of this capacity.

But what will put a smile on your face is all that engine power - forget the cost of fuel, it's negligible in the big picture. The overall comfort, the ease of towing and the simple peace

of mind that you are not holding up faster flowing traffic is well worth the few extra rands in the fuel bill.

As regards towing performance, this combination will do zero to 100 km/h in 11.4 seconds, climb our 2 km mountain pass in the Cape in 1 minute 24 seconds, and will reach a top speed of 160 km/h (if you were on a race track!).

The automatic gearbox is smooth - shift it into D for drive and let it do all the work while you relax and enjoy the scenery while travelling up hill and down dale.

Under hard acceleration, first gear will propel this combination up to 60 km, second gear goes to 105 km/h, and then you'll have three more gears!

Overtaking can be a quick flick of the wrist on the automatic transmission lever and from 80 to 100 km/h will only take 4.97 seconds. Or you can merely use the automatic 'kick-down' for gear selection for

overtaking. It all adds up to capable, hassle-free towing, which is the bit I most enjoyed about the combination.

I also like the steering mechanics - while towing, it's precise, not too heavy and not too light, providing good feel for the towing combination,

and the suspension is firm but not hard (considering that it has rear leaf spring suspension and that this vehicle is capable of carrying an 843 kg load in its dual-skinned load box).

Brakes

Braking performance is enhanced by electronics, another plus factor over many other double-cab vehicles.

The combination tested here could stop from 100 km/h to zero in 3.3 seconds, quick for a combination that weighs in at 3 168 kg.

It's a car and more

While the cab interior is one of the widest and tallest on the market, it is also neat, simple and stylish, offering a number of useful features:

Cruise control is standard on the steering wheel on all models, a first for a double-cab range in South Africa, and there's ABS braking plus EBD (Electronic Brake force Distribution) and BA (Brake Assist).

The Navara offers electrically powered tinted windows, air-conditioning that includes warm ducting to the rear seat passengers, an anti-dazzle rearview mirror, a lockable glove box plus a centre console between the front seats, a radio/CD player and a 60/40 rear seat split. The rear seat folds forward if you need more space or need to place a portable deep freeze here.

The loadbox has big anchor points which can be adjusted to suit loads that require restraining, such as quad bikes or portable braais etc that might otherwise move in transit, causing damage. And if you fit a canopy, these can simply be removed until needed.

Built in Spain, the Navara with its big cab and bold styling offers a three year warranty, which, when combined with the towing peace-of-mind afforded by the engine power, contributes greatly to stress-free motoring. If you don't agree, we'd like to hear from you.

Cost R286 000



Navara 4,0i V6 DC AT towing Gypsy Regal GVM 1 330kg

ENGINE	Petrol
Cylinders/capacity	V6 /3 954 cm ³
Power I.S.O. (kW/revs)	198@ 5 600
Torque (N.m/revs)	385@ 4 000
TRANSMISSION	
Shift type	automatic
Drive wheels	rear
ACCELERATION (seconds)	
0-60 km/h	6.37
0-80 km/h	8.94
0-100 km/h	11.4
Top speed towing	160 km/h
HILL CLIMB	
200m climb over 2 km	1 min 24 secs
OVERTAKING ABILITY (seconds)	
60-80 km/h	3.97
80-100 km/h	4.87
100-120 km/h	9.32
BRAKING (seconds)	
60-0 km/h	2.6
100-0 km/h	3.3
towball height	490 mm
Towball height with caravan	428 mm
FUEL CONSUMPTION	
100 km/h	17.2l/100km

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