

# Nissan Navara

By Godfrey Castle



**T**he Nissan Navara must rate as one of the top two double cabs on the South African market. I like the squared off, macho body styling – it has an appealing ruggedness that befits a leisure lifestyle double cab pick up and it's nice to drive. Just one little point keeps it from my top spot!

Remember those big, red Nissan Hardbody bakkies built in South Africa for off-road racing in Dakar? Well, the Navara has similar styling but is bigger overall in that is longer, wider and higher than the Hardbody. The Navara also goes a step further in that it is designed to be more of a sports utility vehicle than a conventional double cab pimped to car-like standards.

Built in Spain, the Navara heralds in a new standard of quality for Nissan products, that is if the Navara, Pathfinder and X-trail are anything to go by.

The Navara, in its current rear wheel drive only platform, is powered by a turbo-charged 2.5-litre direct injection common rail diesel engine developing 106 kW of power and 356 Nm of torque. It is available in both automatic and six-speed manual transmission.

For petrol heads there is a 4-litre 198 kW petrol engine model that develops 386 Nm of torque. And compliments to Nissan, they state in their brochure that the Navara is capable of a maximum towing capacity of 3 000 kg for the six-speed manual, probably one of the highest tow capacities in the bakkie market, although by law you cannot exceed the tare mass of 1 872 kg on the test vehicle featured here.

## Towing a Palma

An interesting point - according to our figures this 2.5-litre diesel puts out more kilowatts and torque than the Steve's Auto Clinic modified Toyota KZTE 3-litre diesel. And as a comparison, in the time taken for our standard hill climb test there are only 0.5 seconds difference between the two towing the same 1 380 kg Jurgens Palma. Not many vehicles can manage the Cape's Ou Kaapseweg hill climb in fourth gear during a timed climb. Perhaps it's a result of the gearing ratio availability presented by a six speed gearbox, but the climb is comfortable without excessive over-revving or labouring of the engine, and we timed out at one minute forty three seconds

over the two kilometre climb with the Navara/Palma combination.

Turbo-diesel powered vehicles impress me more and more for towing, not only for their economy, but they are proving pretty quick on the hills as these two vehicles show.

Acceleration from zero to 100 km/h was 25.31 seconds and we recorded a top speed of 130 km/h. If anything, this engine starts to lose performance at higher speeds, but on the plus side zero to 60 km/h was only eight seconds!

So engine performance for towing a caravan of this weight is comfortable, it's neither underpowered or overpowered and being diesel you can expect a fuel consumption in the vicinity of 13-litres per hundred kilometres, depending on your driving style.

Braking performance was not bad either, that's 3.84 seconds from 100 km/h to zero which is bang on our average figure as found on the towing data pages of this magazine.

## Stability

Being bigger and wider than the Nissan Hardbody you can expect better stability, but another factor that also comes into play is the overall ground clearance of the Navara. It is

not as high as a typical 4x4 double cab derivative even though it retains the truck-like suspension of coil springs up front and leaf springs at the rear. Instead the Navara is wide and squat, with little body roll to upset a caravan, and leaf springs that can carry the load of the holiday gear.

The rear suspension dropped by 32 mm with the Palma, which presented a ride height of 480 mm, not quite enough to require a drop plate; perhaps the extra load of camping accessories placed into the loading bay would reduce the overall height by a few more millimetres.

## Exterior features

The lack of add-on plastic, particularly around the wheel arch flares (these are pressed steel on the Navara) add a reassuring feeling of body strength as do the styled running boards and rear bumper. There is a clean front end and radiator grille, which also has twin spotlights to assist the stylish and powerful headlights.

Unusual features would include the chunky roof racks, which, like them or not, can be useful for attaching anything from fishing rods to mountain bikes. And if the roof racks look chunky wait till you see the adjustable load utility cargo tie-down points in the load box area - they look strong enough to strap down a bull elephant (though it would perhaps have to be a dwarf bull elephant).

These tie down points are unusual in

that they are inside the load area which leaves the outer body work clean, in case you want to place a matching canopy on the load area and then you still have tie-downs inside the load area.

Good news for towing caravans or boats is that being a wide vehicle it also has big external rear view mirrors on both front doors, this does away with the need for additional towing mirrors.

## Upmarket interior

Sitting back in the driver's seat one can't help but reminisce about the old Nissans and how the standard of trim in the Navara has catapulted this vehicle into the ranks of desirability.

To me the only downfall is the use of hard plastic in parts of the dashboard fascia; a softer touch would be the cherry on the top for me and would complement the soft feel steering wheel.

So what does the interior feature? Our test car had cloth covered seats (cool and comfortable) with lumbar support for the driver while the rear bench seat can fold up to create extra loading space, plus it is split 60/40 so you can still seat one person if required.

Standard features include a six cd front loading sound system playing through six speakers that provide a quality sound; an easy-to-understand radio, and three large knobs for fan, temperature and venting options. There is also a central dashboard mounted central door locking switch, a

cigarette lighter and a neat and stylish instrument binnacle with a separate rev counter (great for towing when it comes to getting maximum torque at the correct revs), speedometer and a fuel gauge.

The height adjustable steering wheel has speed cruise controls set on the right hand spoke and there are electric windows, front and back. There are also front passenger grab handles to make getting in and out of the vehicle easier.

It's a neat interior, well designed and appointed which shouldn't date quickly.

## Summary

In my book there is no comparison between the Navara and the Hardbody, maybe they appeal to different markets but the Navara is the one I would take. It's a good tow vehicle, strong on appeal and it should win many people over to owning a Nissan. There is talk of a 4x4 version, for those who need that capability. ●

## Specifications

### Engine

Type	Turbo diesel
Cylinder & capacity	4cyl 2 488cm <sup>3</sup>
Power I.S.O. (kW/revs)	106/4 000
Torque (Nm/revs)	356/2 000

### Transmission

Type	6 speed manual
Drive wheels	rear

### Acceleration

0 - 100 km/h	25.31
Hill climb	1 min 43 secs

### Overtaking ability (seconds)

60-80 km/h	7.97
80-100 km/h	9.75

### Fuel consumption (litres/100 km)

100 km/h	13.7
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Price	R269 900
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Some may like the hard plastic used on the dashboard, but we would prefer a soft-feel plastic. It's a simple, efficient interior that includes fold-up rear bench seats.



Lower than a standard 4x4 the Navara does away with needing a drop plate for the correct tow-ball height.