

Simple pleasures.

Small ute takes on the mighty Northwest.

By Joe Sage



SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE.....2.5L 16v DOHC CVTCS 4-cylinder
Horsepower/Torque170 hp / 175 lb-ft
TRANSMISSIONCVT
DRIVETRAINAll-wheel drive
BASE PRICE\$25,220
OPTIONS: SL Package: Leather trimmed seats and steering wheel, heated front seats and mirrors, automatic temp, touchscreen navigation, Bose premium audio with XM Nav-Traffic, Around View™ monitor, power sliding glass moonroof, auto on/off HID xenon headlights with levelizer, fog lights, 18-inch aluminum alloy wheels\$3900
Splash guards\$135
Rear bumper protector\$60
Floor mats and cargo area protector...\$190
Illuminated kick plates\$225
DESTINATION CHARGE\$810
TOTAL PRICE.....\$30,540



We've spent ample time in Nissan's larger crossover utility, the Murano, and in their innovative and hot-selling little Juke. As we flew to Tacoma for the Grand Opening of LeMay—America's Car Museum, the stars aligned for time in the compact crossover Nissan Rogue. The Rogue occupies a segment of runaway popularity, shared with the Ford Escape, Jeep Liberty and Kia Sorento (see elsewhere in this issue), among others. And it is a great contender.

The Murano broke new ground when it debuted, well ahead of the curve for moving beyond the boxy SUV, and has stood the test of time very well. The Rogue is almost a downscaled Murano, though its proportions are readily distinguished. If you like either the Murano or the Rogue, you will have no problem considering the other size.

The 2012 Nissan Rogue has a 2.5-liter, 170-hp inline-four and is available in S and SV trim levels, in either front- or all-wheel drive. Ours for the weekend was the SV AWD. As in the Murano, the transmission is a CVT (continuously variable transmission) with a Sport Mode. We paid attention to the CVT while driving, knowing some people do not favor them, but generally didn't really suffer any difference. The Rogue delivers its power in a uniform band, as intended.

Brakes are disc, front and rear. Front suspension is independent strut with coil springs, while the rear is independent multi-link, rounded out by front and rear stabilizer bars plus twin-tube shocks. The S model has 16-inch wheels, while the SV comes with 17-inch or optional 18-inch wheels. There is a temporary spare, stowed under the cargo floor.

On our first stretch of I-5 from SeaTac Airport to Tacoma, we found the ride firm. We like this accurate feeling of the road, but noted that some might prefer a softer ride. That was before we took a better look at the road—a major highway that was rough, textured and full of cracks. Our trip was around Tacoma—no island-hopping or off-roading—but based on that, we rated the ride and cabin comfort as superb in tough conditions.

We're partial to Nissan's generally clean approach to body styling, instrumentation and interiors. The Rogue is no exception. The Bose Premium Audio system was a winner, and we loved the Around View™ monitor (both options in the same package: see sidebar). Around View projects your surroundings—e.g. the cars on every side in a tight parking spot—onto a visual map that mimics a satellite view of yourself. (Mercedes-Benz is introducing the same thing). It's almost magic, and very useful.

The 2013 Nissan Rogue—with some differences in option packaging—should be in dealerships by the time you read this. An all-new Rogue arrives next year. ■

