

Microcosm

BY JOE SAGE



When Infiniti was invented as Nissan's luxury brand for the US (in the same general time-frame that Honda and Toyota invented Acura and Lexus, respectively), they put an emphasis not only on premium fitment, but also on performance. The little Infiniti QX30 Sport brings these original sensibilities to compact crossover territory.

The QX30 looks sporty from the base \$29,950 model on up, with wide stance and muscular bulges in purposeful places. The QX30 Sport, powered by the same 2-liter turbo as other models, gets its edge from lower ride height (6.1 inches of ground clearance vs 6.8 on other FWD models or 8 inches with AWD) and has upsized 19-inch aluminum alloy wheels, part function and part style, Sport front and rear lower fascias, a gloss black grille, body-color side sills and dark chrome exhaust tips.

All-wheel drive is available on two midrange models, but not on the base QX30 nor the top-dollar Sport, where emphasis is on aerodynamics and weight. (Sport is the heaviest FWD trim by just 18 pounds, but AWD would add over 100 pounds,

though a Sport/AWD combo would still seem appealing.) The AWD models are solid crossover entries, while the FWD models seem more wagon-like, the QX30 thus arguably a performance hatch.

We had a good week with the car. We played considerably with its sport, manual and economy modes, sometimes with surprising results. The car's idle start/stop is one of the smoothest. Downsides? Touchscreen scrolling can be a little too eager, the electronic park button is awkward if cupholders are in use, and Park releases as reluctantly as if the car were frozen to ice. Upsides: this is an attractive and highly maneuverable little guy with ample power for its size and weight.

This car's performance is quick, flat and steady, zipping satisfyingly through traffic of widely varying conditions and speeds. The Infiniti QX30 Sport is kind of a microcosm of many elements of the industry today—small yet premium, sporty yet frugal, stylish yet fundamental, affordable by some comparisons, upscale by others. The best parts of each are what shine through. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE/DRIVETRAIN	2.0L turbo 4-cyl / FWD
HP/TORQUE	208 hp / 258 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	7-spd dual clutch
BRAKES	FR 12.6 vented, R 11.6 solid disc
STEERING / SUSPENSION	electric power assist FR: McPherson strut; R: multi-link, stabilizer bars
WHEELS / TIRES	19x8 alum alloy, Goodyear 235/45R19
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	174.2 in / 106.3 in
SEATING / CARGO CAPACITY	five / 19.2 cu.ft
WEIGHT	3364 lb
MPG	24/33/27 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE	\$38,500
SPORT LEATHER PACKAGE: Nappa leather heated seats, stitched dash insert, front passenger seat storage, black headliner and A-pillar, leatherette door/console	
	1500
SPORT TECHNOLOGY PACKAGE: Blind spot warning, lane departure warning, forward emergency braking, smart cruise, high beam assist	
	1200
SPORT LED PACKAGE: LED headlamps, active front lighting, enhanced LED interior lighting	
	1000
SPORT NAVIGATION PACKAGE: InTouch with nav including six months	
	INCLUDED
MOONROOF: Panoramic w/power shades	
	INCLUDED
ILLUMINATED KICK PLATES:	
	540
DESTINATION CHARGE:	
	995
TOTAL	\$43,735

