

# A big leap from Leaf— Nissan EVs e-evolve

BY JOE SAGE

Nissan holds a key spot in EV history with its Leaf, introduced in 2010 for the 2011 model year, the first mass-production 50-state electric vehicle, setting the early pace for universal charging technologies, and boasting one of the highest owner retention rates in the industry. Nissan Leaf soldiers on, but while the spotlight has spread wider through the industry over recent years, Nissan has otherwise been pretty quiet on EVs. Until now.

And that's fine. It's a time of great change, and

some corporate caution can be appropriate. We're not huge fans of throwing away all the great products and technologies of the internal combustion era, anyway; and it gave Nissan time for further development, a chance to really get it right.

Their new entry is the 2023 Nissan Ariya. There are nine variants (see sidebar) priced from \$43,190 to \$60,190. Five are front-wheel-drive and four e-4ORCE all-wheel-drive (with just two of seven trims offering both). Two base versions have lower

power, while higher power units have a "plus" designation (except for one). Our Evolve+ e-4ORCE is sort of upper-mid-pack at \$54,190 (there are three higher trims, but only one higher e-4ORCE AWD).

The first Leaf, much like early hybrids, had a bit of look-at-me-I'm-different styling, while gen-two, since 2018, was more conventional. The new Ariya EV, a compact crossover, is also conventional in appearance, while also evolutionary, great news, as Nissan has been overdue for a facelift. They call the new look "Timeless Japanese Futurism," simple yet powerful modern styling.

Our week with the Ariya generated far more observations than average. But ours was a prepro-

duction unit (see sidebar). Many notes were about issues with switches and screen, likely not complete, and an incessant voice assistant, difficult to turn off, which may or may not be complete.

A positive direction that probably is complete is that whereas we're often surprised by EVs that, despite being thoroughly electric, lack such common features as power seats, but this has those and more, such as a nifty power console top. Such pleasures are likely to dominate the final vehicle.

Suspension and powertrain are likely complete, and we soon made fast friends with the driving experience—quick and accurate, accelerating and handling nicely, smooth on rough pavements, generally lacking in no regard. Braking disturbed us, however—generally adequate, but usually followed by a very disquieting additional movement

forward. Regenerative brake implementations vary tremendously, and on this the key is an e-Step mode, which may have mitigated that, but instead seemed to stop us about six car-lengths prematurely. We're hoping this is still being fine-tuned.

Those loose ends aside, we found a likable new machine representing a likable new direction or two for this likable brand. It's a handsome crossover with solid performance and content value. It bears a bit less horsepower than some, though has well more than most gasoline comparables, is a more accessible entry to the EV world, and delivers a solid kick in the pants. Range and charging times are both very good. Neat, tidy, functional and purposeful, the new Nissan Ariya strikes us as being ahead of the curve on the mainstreaming of EVs—a solid entry from a solid brand. ■



## SPECIFICATIONS [ + e-4ORCE ]

ASSEMBLY.....	Tochigi, Japan
CLASSIFICATION.....	small station wagon
MOTOR.....	dual externally excited synchronous motors (EESM)
OUTPUT.....	290 kW
HP/TORQUE.....	389 hp / 442 lb-ft
BATTERY.....	Li-ion liquid-cooled underfloor 91 kWh total, 87 kWh usable capacity
TRANSMISSION.....	single speed
DRIVETRAIN.....	AWD
SUSPENSION.....	F: indep strut w coils, 23.4mm hollow stblzr bar R: indep multi-link, 28.6mm hollow stblzr bar
STEERING.....	elec pwr-assist
BRAKES.....	F: 14.3x1.18 vented; R: 13.0x0.63 vented
WHEELS.....	19x7.5 alum alloy w aero covers
TIRES.....	235/55R19 all-season
TURNING CIRCLE.....	35.4 ft
GROUND CLEARANCE.....	6.7 in
APPR/DEP/BRKVR.....	17.7 / 21.9 / 16.5°
LENGTH / WHEELBASE.....	182.9 / 109.3 in
HEADROOM (F/R).....	37.9 / 36.6 in
LEGROOM (F/R).....	42.3 / 37.0 in
CARGO CAPACITY.....	22.8 / 59.7 cu.ft
CURB WEIGHT.....	4899 lb
TOW CAPACITY.....	1500 lb
CHARGING TIMES.....	Level 2 (0-100%) 14 hrs Quick charge 50 kW (10-80%) 90 min Quick charge 130 kW (10-80%) 40 min
RANGE.....	272 miles
MPGe.....	97/86/92 (city/hwy/comb)
BASE PRICE.....	<b>\$54,190</b>
TWO-TONE PAINT: Boulder Gray Pearl	
/Black Diamond Pearl.....	350
FLOOR MATS.....	250
DESTINATION CHARGE.....	1335
<b>TOTAL.....</b>	<b>\$56,125</b>

## 2023 NISSAN ARIYA LINEUP

	FWD	e-4ORCE AWD
Engage.....	63 kWh.....\$43,190	\$47,190
Engage+.....	87 kWh.....	51,190
Venture+.....	47,190.....	---
Evolve+.....	50,190.....	▼ 54,190
Empower+.....	53,690.....	---
Premiere.....	54,690.....	---
Platinum+.....	---	60,190

## PREPRODUCTION UNIT

We receive occasional pre-production vehicles for review, which can mean different things. Most are indistinguishable from the final—complete, just built in low volume before the assembly line fires up at speed. A few are more like prototypes, with some features incomplete or only roughly in place. Supply chain challenges the past few years have contributed to more being incomplete, but we often don't know specifically what may be a temporary or partially fleshed-out detail. There is also almost never an owner's manual. As such, many issues during our week may not be representative, so detailing them could be misleading. But we do look forward to driving a final version when available, so we can compare, confirm or clarify any number of things.