

# 4x4 OF THE YEAR

## 2004 • PICK-UPS GROUP •

### 1st

# NISSAN NAVARA 2.5 DOUBLE CAB



**T**he gutsy snarl from under the bulging air-scooped bonnet, matched by a rate of acceleration quite remarkable in a pick-up, was almost enough on its own to secure top marks for the boldly-styled Nissan Navara, but it also has other attributes that propel it ahead of other more mundane one-tonners that have assumed the role of the recreational off-road vehicle.

The Navara doesn't have the roomiest cabin, so legroom for back-bench passengers isn't quite as spacious as in some other pick-ups, but there's still plenty of room with reasonably comfortable seating for five adults, and the reason the cab is a little shorter than others is because the Nissan apportioned more of its length to the cargo bay which is, after all, one of the most important features of any pick-up, recreational or not. The cabin provides more than adequate accommodation for the active family while the pick-up bed can take a good load of camping, climbing, fishing, riding or other outdoors adventure kit.

### CREATURE COMFORTS

If the Navara appears at first expensive compared to its rivals, consider the equipment specification, which will ensure long-distance family comfort thanks to velour-upholstered seats, climate control air conditioning and a CD player, while the front windows are electrically operated, the door mirrors powered and heated. Safety is assured with airbag protection for the front passenger as well as driver and anti-lock brakes. On a purely cosmetic note the exterior is brightened by aluminium side steps, chromed door mirrors and natty 16in alloy wheels. Leather trim graces the

steering wheel and gear knob, sporty touches matched by race-white instrument dials.

But the truck's dynamic performance is still its greatest asset. With 133 horses providing the power the Navara is the quickest of the pick-ups, with performance more akin to that of a sports utility, so there's less of a feeling that you have to move seriously downmarket to achieve double-cab versatility. The frontal styling, with its emotive chrome grille, reflects the same image as the more luxurious 4x4 estates in the Nissan range, reinforcing the feeling that the Navara is much more sports than utility.

The suspension is not as refined as any more sophisticated family off-roader, but it is set up a little more softly than more work-oriented pick-ups, so ride comfort isn't bad although it can feel a little crashy when driven unladen. The big power of the engine also means class-leading torque, the beefy 227lb ft giving the Nissan an easy edge over its rivals in the rough where it readily outpaces others with its ability to tread gently through mud, and to climb long, steep, slopes. Axle articulation is also considerably better than others – one reason for the softer suspension feel – but even when terrain gets humpy enough to lift a wheel a limited-slip differential helps maintain traction.

There's a certain lack of refinement about the Navara's drivetrain as a whole, as the 2.5-litre turbodiesel in particular rattles a little too much on idle and growls vociferously under hard acceleration, to the accompaniment of a fair amount of mechanical whine and turbo hiss, but, let's be honest, it's not enough of a racket to detract significantly from the sheer pleasure of driving such a lively, good-looking and comfortable pick-up.

### SPECIFICATIONS

Price:	£19,508
Engine cc/bhp:	2488/133
Transmission:	5-speed manual, selectable 4WD, dual range

### RATINGS (0-10)

Comfort:	7
Refinement:	6
Off-road:	7
Value:	7
Style:	9
TOTAL:	36

**WE LIKED:** Aggressive styling, powerful engine  
**WE DISLIKED:** Unnecessarily noisy engine

