



MITSUBISHI PININ 2.0 GDI EQUIPPE 5-DR



The junior companion to the big-bruiser Shogun sounds great on paper with its lively engine and true four-wheel-drive system, but there's hardly room to breathe with five adults aboard, and hardly any luggage. Maximising space necessarily results in boxy and uninteresting styling, so the five-door Pinin doesn't make much of a splash in high-image quarters of the city. Off-road it's good: super-select 4WD system, low range and central diff lock, though relatively low ground clearance and poor axle articulation eventually defeat it. The lusty 2.0-litre engine makes for spirited town driving, and it rides comfortably enough though can feel a bit choppy in the rough. The Equippe version featured here is probably the best value with its good convenience specification.

SPECIFICATIONS

Price:	£15,995
Engine cc/bhp:	1999/127
Transmission:	5-speed manual, dual range, selectable 4WD

RATINGS (0-10)

Comfort:	5
Refinement:	6
Off-road:	7
Value:	7
Style:	5
TOTAL:	30

WE LIKED: Decent off-road ability
WE DISLIKED: Compromised styling

NISSAN X-TRAIL 2.5 SUE



There's been an attempt to lean on the Freelander's shapely success in the X-Trail's wrap-up front spoiler and fluted bonnet, but the result is clumsy rather than inspiring. High on practicality, the Nissan has a spacious interior with an excellent cargo bay floored in wipe-clean plastic which, along with an easy seat-fold arrangement, makes it great for ferrying outdoor equipment about. This bigger-engined version lacks the verve of the 2.5-litre Freelander V6 but is still a delight to drive. On the road the Nissan feels taut and nimble, a consequence of a firm suspension set-up that moderates its off-road agility since even the complex electronically-controlled four-wheel drive system can't cope adequately when the X-Trail starts lifting wheels.

SPECIFICATIONS

Price:	£20,495
Engine cc/bhp:	2488/165
Transmission:	5-speed manual, selectable 4WD

RATINGS (0-10)

Comfort:	7
Refinement:	7
Off-road:	4
Value:	7
Style:	6
TOTAL:	31

WE LIKED: Great engine and handling
WE DISLIKED: Heavy steering

TOYOTA RAV4 2.0 D-4D VX 5-DR



Wacky styling rarely endures, but the Toyota seems to be becoming a classic among the mass of oddly bland, overly conservative newcomers. The RAV4's chunky appeal hints at off-roading adventure, but it's really a pretender, designed mainly for tarmac. It has permanent four-wheel drive but no low range, and the suspension is tuned for highway handling. Equipment is excellent in this leather-upholstered and air-conditioned range-topping version, so it looks excellent value though it's worth checking if your family will fit comfortably inside the cosy cabin which isn't as roomy as it would appear to be from the car's bulky dimensions. Best feature – save for street presence – is the D-4D turbodiesel, smooth, powerful and economical.

SPECIFICATIONS

Price:	£17,495
Engine cc/bhp:	1995/134
Transmission:	5-speed manual, permanent 4WD

RATINGS (0-10)

Comfort:	6
Refinement:	6
Off-road:	3
Value:	7
Style:	5
TOTAL:	27

WE LIKED: Adventurous image and styling
WE DISLIKED: Little use off road