

## Honest Truck Muscle

### Frontier PRO-4X Keeps Midsize Trucking Refreshingly Real

By Derek Price

CARGAZING.COM

After a week behind the wheel, what stood out most was not some flashy screen, gimmicky drive mode or marketing-driven styling flourish. It was the simple, increasingly rare sensation that this is a real truck.

It feels heavy. It feels meaty. It feels like there is actual substance under you.

That may sound old-fashioned, but I mean it as a compliment.

Compared with lighter-duty pickups such as the Ford Maverick, the Frontier feels like it comes from a different branch of the truck family tree. The Maverick is clever, efficient and easygoing. The Frontier is stout, upright and unapologetically trucky.

That is especially true in PRO-4X form, which is aimed at buyers who want more than a rugged appearance package.

Nissan gives it useful off-road hardware, including Bilstein shocks, all-terrain tires, skid plates and an electronic locking rear differential. It is not pretending to be a trail truck. It actually has the parts to back up the attitude.

It also has the right look. The Frontier's shape is traditional and upright without becoming cartoonishly aggressive. Some modern pickups seem locked in a grille-size arms



The 2026 Nissan Frontier PRO-4X has an upright stance, rugged bodywork and traditional pickup proportions that give it a tough but restrained look.

race, especially the big heavy-duty models. The Frontier avoids that trap. It looks tough without shouting at everyone in the parking lot.

Under the hood, Nissan's naturally aspirated 3.8-liter V6 is one of this truck's most appealing traits. In a world increasingly filled with small turbocharged engines, the Frontier's V6 feels reassuringly direct and straightforward. It makes 310 horsepower and 281 pound-feet of torque, and it pairs with a nine-speed automatic transmission.

The tradeoff is obvious at the pump. The PRO-4X is rated at 16 mpg in the city, 20 on the highway and 18

combined, which keeps it from being a smart choice for buyers who mostly want cheap commuting.

This truck makes more sense for people who tow, haul, hunt, camp, explore back roads or simply like the old-school feel of a body-on-frame pickup.

The Frontier lineup is rated to tow as much as 7,150 pounds, though the PRO-4X Crew Cab is rated lower depending on bed length. Either way, it feels built for real work.

The ride reinforces that personality.

With leaf springs in back, the Frontier can feel a little bouncy over rough pavement. Some drivers will

buttons are easy to find. The layout is intuitive, and wireless Apple CarPlay worked flawlessly with my iPhone.

The back seat is tighter than some rivals, and families with tall teenagers should try it before buying. The cabin is practical and straightforward, but it does not feel as roomy or polished as the newest Toyota Tacoma in some areas.

Value helps the Nissan make its case. The PRO-4X Crew Cab starts at \$41,870 before destination, undercutting some serious off-road rivals by thousands. A Jeep Gladiator offers open-air personality, a Toyota Tacoma has huge name recognition and a Ford Ranger Raptor brings more speed and theater. The Frontier answers with honest capability, simpler controls and a lower price.

That combination works. The 2026 Frontier PRO-4X is not for everyone, and that is part of why I like it. It is not chasing maximum fuel economy, luxury-car silence or crossover softness. It is a sturdy, serious midsize truck with the right stance, real off-road gear and enough old-school character to feel distinct.

For the buyer who wants a capable off-road pickup without spending a fortune, this Nissan deserves a long look.

#### AT A GLANCE

##### WHAT WAS TESTED?

2026 Nissan Frontier PRO-4X Crew Cab SWB (\$41,870). Options: Pro convenience package (\$1,540), Pro premium package (\$3,060), premium paint (\$450). Price as tested (including \$1,695 destination charge): \$48,735

##### BY THE NUMBERS

Wheelbase: 126.0 in.  
Length: 210.2 in.  
Width: 74.7 in.  
Height: 72.9 in.  
Engine: 3.8-liter V6 (310 hp, 281 lb.-ft.)  
Transmission: Nine-speed automatic  
MPG: 16 city, 20 highway

##### RATINGS

Style: 9  
Performance: 8  
Price: 8  
Handling: 5  
Ride: 6  
Comfort: 6  
Quality: 7  
Overall: 8

##### WHY BUY IT?

The Frontier PRO-4X gives buyers real truck feel, serious off-road hardware and strong value in a midsize pickup that still feels built for work.

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Inside, the Frontier features simple controls, useful physical buttons and a straightforward cabin layout designed for easy everyday use.

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The ride reinforces that personality.

With leaf springs in back, the Frontier can feel a little bouncy over rough pavement. Some drivers will call that dated. I found it part of the charm. It rides comfortably enough for daily use, but it never lets you forget there is a truck frame, four-wheel-drive hardware and serious suspension travel doing business underneath.

The steering is heavy, too. Again, I like that. It gives the Frontier a solid, confident feel that fits its mission. Buyers who want something light, quiet and effortless may prefer a crossover or a Maverick.

Inside, the Frontier's simplicity is refreshing.

The cabin does not overwhelm drivers with screen-dependent controls or endless menus. Physical buttons are easy to find. The layout is intuitive, and wireless Apple CarPlay worked flawlessly with my iPhone.

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#### A CLOSER LOOK



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FACTS, FIGURES AND RATINGS

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