

Performance With Purpose

Armada NISMO Blends Family SUV Practicality, Genuine Driver Appeal

By Derek Price

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The Armada NISMO surprised me.

It's fun to drive. More than that, it feels honest about what it is, which is rarer than it should be in this segment.

Nissan didn't try to convince anyone the Armada NISMO is a track weapon. What they built is a full-size family SUV with sharper reflexes, a meaner exhaust note and enough personality to make daily driving more interesting.

Under the hood sits a twin-turbocharged 3.5-liter V6 producing 460 horsepower and 516 pound-feet of torque, making this the most powerful Armada Nissan has ever built.

The engine pairs with a nine-speed automatic transmission and standard four-wheel drive, and the power is available everywhere you ask for it. Merging onto the highway. Jumping off a stoplight. Passing a slow pickup on a two-lane road. It pulls hard without feeling juvenile about it.

NISMO retuned the steering, suspension and exhaust as well, and the difference shows up immediately. The big SUV feels more planted, more eager and louder in a satisfying way. None of it crosses into punishment territory, which is the harder trick.



The 2026 Nissan Armada NISMO combines aggressive styling, widened bodywork and unique performance-inspired details to give the full-size SUV a more athletic presence.

That balance is what won me over.

The Armada NISMO still works as a highway cruiser. It stays quiet at cruising speed. The seats hold up over hundreds of miles and the cabin keeps most of the road noise outside where it belongs.

Pricing also lands in a defensible spot. A Cadillac Escalade-V starts around \$160,000 and feels almost cartoonish doing it. A Dodge Durango SRT Hellcat pushes near six-figure money and leans all the way into muscle-car parody.

The Armada NISMO starts at \$79,530, and my tester

came to \$83,735 with destination and options. That is still real money for a Nissan, but in the company it keeps, it almost looks like a bargain.

The styling holds the same middle ground. NISMO-specific fascias, flared fenders, a rear spoiler and unique 22-inch wheels give the SUV more presence without turning it into a parking lot show car.

Inside, the update works. Dual 14.3-inch displays push the Armada dashboard into the current decade. Quilted leather, red contrast stitching and ambient lighting separate the NISMO from

cheaper Armadas without overplaying their hand.

Better still, Nissan didn't sacrifice the practical bones. This is still a body-on-frame SUV with a tow rating of 8,500 pounds and three rows that fit seven without complaint. Plenty of performance SUVs quietly trade those numbers away to chase a track image. The Armada NISMO doesn't.

Physics still wins in the end. This thing weighs more than 6,000 pounds, and you feel it in tight parking lots and slow-speed maneuvers. The steering can feel heavy. The turning radius reminds you there's a truck frame

under all of this.

Ride quality is firmer than some buyers will expect, too. The 22-inch wheels and performance-oriented suspension send sharper impacts into the cabin than a standard Armada would.

The Armada NISMO works because Nissan picked a lane. It isn't pretending to be a supercar for the suburbs. It's a capable, comfortable family SUV with some extra muscle and personality.

I went in wanting to dislike it. I came out wondering why more performance SUVs aren't built with this much common sense.

AT A GLANCE

WHAT WAS TESTED?

2026 Nissan Armada NISMO (\$79,530). Options: Two-tone paint (\$1,450), NISMO carpeted floor mats (\$565). Price as tested (including \$2,190 destination charge): \$83,735

BY THE NUMBERS

Wheelbase: 121.1 in.
Length: 210.9 in.
Width: 83.3 in.
Height: 76.6 in.
Engine: 3.5-liter twin turbo V6 (460 hp, 516 lb.-ft.)
Transmission: Nine-speed automatic
MPG: 16 city, 19 highway

RATINGS

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

WHY BUY IT?

The Armada NISMO is for buyers who want full-size SUV practicality, strong towing capability and everyday comfort wrapped in a performance-focused package.

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The Armada NISMO still works as a highway cruiser. It stays quiet at cruising speed. The seats hold up over hundreds of miles



Inside, the Armada NISMO features large digital displays, quilted materials, sporty accents and a spacious three-row cabin designed for comfort and technology.

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A CLOSER LOOK



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FACTS, FIGURES AND RATINGS

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