

Toyota commits to cars

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TEST DRIVE

First Cabin Fleet

2019 Nissan Armada Platinum 4WD

DAN LYONS | text and photos
Special to the Times Union

Armada is offered in SV, SL and Platinum trims. For buyers who want to go first cabin, Platinum models can be further decked out with the Reserve package, as was this week's test drive subject. Reserve (\$3,000) adds premium, two-tone leather seats and trim, as well as a dark chrome finish for the front grille, door handles, outside mirrors and 20-inch, model-specific wheels.



Regardless of trim, \$3,000 is also the dollar difference between the standard rear-wheel-drive setup and optional, four-wheel-drive. On the latter, drivers can select Automatic, 4High and 4Low settings from the computer controlled transfer case, via console mounted knob.

Here, too, are buttons for Snow and Tow modes, which optimize throttle response and transmission shift points accordingly. Armada isn't as trail capable

2019 Nissan Armada Platinum 4WD

MSRP: \$47,100 (base SV)

As Tested: \$67,850 (Platinum Reserve 4WD)

as its overseas cousin (the Nissan Patrol), but it isn't designed to be.

The majority of Armada buyers aren't interested in venturing seriously off road, and the big ute can easily handle all the unimproved roads you're likely to encounter. A more likely application for AWD is a northeastern winter, which we have the pleasure of experiencing every. single. year.

The combination of Armada's snow-crushing bulk and its smart, traction-related electronics are confidence boosters when encountering wintry conditions. If you're shopping for a large SUV and you live where we live, I don't know why you *wouldn't* pop for the added traction. And on those days when roads are clear, handling is confident (and decidedly not sporty), with a luxurious ride quality.

The other options on my full-size ute tester were carpeted floor mats (\$300 — Ouch!), and a seating package that swaps the second-row bench for a pair of captain's chairs and center console (\$450). This reduces the potential number of passengers from eight to seven, and adds a heavily padded, oversized bin in between the row two occupants. I suspect that families will find the



THE ARMADA is Nissan's fullsize SUV, offered in SV, SL and Platinum trims. Rear-wheel-drive is standard, with four-wheel-drive as an option.

substantial, rear console in back a worthwhile buffer between children of all ages, who might not be nuts about the person they're sitting next to. While we're in the back seat (and thinking about the value of useful distractions), the Family Entertainment system includes two 8-inch color displays (embedded in the back of the front seat headrests), two sets of wireless headphones, and one HDMI input. What price trip tranquility? It's standard on Platinum, and unavailable in other trims.

Second-seat room is adult worthy. Owing to limited head (36.4 inches) and leg (28.4 inches) room, and a knees-up floor height, the third row is best suited to kids. A childlike limberness is also useful for wiggling

Armada's snow-crushing bulk and its smart, traction-related electronics are confidence boosters in wintry conditions.

your way in and out of the way-back row. Those seats are power folding, by the way, but they're sloooow in doing so. Overall cargo capacity starts at 16.5 cubic feet aft of row three, increases to 49.9 behind the second row, and tops out at 95.4, behind the first row. That's a lot of storage space, though the third row seat backs fold to a slanted load floor, and the vehicle's size makes for a high lift over height in back.

I have a running beef with running boards. In the decades leading up to WW II, when cars were tall and men wore fedoras, running boards were routinely fitted to cars to ease the process of getting in and out. Because everyone was doing it, car manufacturers got pretty good at it, routinely designing them with ample room

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