

LAST PATROL

While we no longer see the Patrol in the UK, it still lives in Australia and the Middle East. But is the latest 5.7-litre version a 'real' Patrol?

Words and photography: Robert Pepper

The vehicle here is the Y62 Nissan Patrol, and it is not popular with the Aussies who own its immediate ancestor, the Y61 GU Patrol that has long been a highly popular and revered vehicle for touring off-roaders. And the reason for this displeasure is because the Patrol has switched segments. It's changed.

The Y62 is built for the citizens of the Middle East who buy more Patrols than anyone else. These guys like their cars big, petrol and powerful, so the new Patrol sports a 5.7-litre V8 petrol engine, seven-speed automatic gearbox and manages to make the Discovery 4, Range Rover and even Toyota's Land Cruiser look small by comparison. There's no diesel option, and for a car that size that means hefty fuel bills and short range. The traditionalists, and there's plenty in the Patrol fraternity, bemoan anything electronic and without solid axles, so the Y62 disappoints on both counts. On my Facebook page, one commentator summarised it perfectly: "It has lost the essence of being a Patrol. It's not designed with an attitude of off-road ability and toughness first, other stuff second."

But is that true? Few of these people

have seen one let alone driven it. But I have, and also done some pretty rough off-roading in it. So here's the answer.

This car is quick in a straight line, 0-100 in under seven seconds. But it is far from agile, as any form of spirited driving starts to squeal the tyres and the stability control light will quickly illuminate. It also understeers more than any car in my recent memory, and to make things worse, the automatic is prone to unwarranted downchanges out of corners, which given its seven speeds and abundance of torque, is

disappointing. On the other hand, the ride is excellent across all surfaces, there's plenty of power, it's quiet and refined and the electronics keep the car impressively flat while cornering.

Overall, the Patrol is a rather unrewarding car to drive on-road – it will comfortably, but joylessly, cover the overlanding miles.

Inside the vehicle there is nothing done particularly well, and some things done poorly. In general, the dash controls are a little last minute with related buttons in different places. The

Below: Old meets new, but has the latest Patrol lost something as it's grown bigger?



right-hand-drive conversion budget didn't extend to moving the gearshift to the right so it's a little stretch to reach. The seats should hold the passengers more firmly, but are easily adjustable. Our test model was the Ti, which didn't have even have satnav. Nissan has, in the Pathfinder, designed a superbly versatile second/third row system. In the Patrol, the engineers have not bothered and followed design conventions last seen in the '80s. The second row is a simple 40/60 split but only two child restraints. The third row seats three in the Ti spec, and it folds down... but doesn't latch down and won't fold flat. That's really unforgivable, and also poor is the massive D-pillar, which intrudes on cargo space. But the overall impression is of space, so if you want your interior huge, the Patrol is your wagon.

Off-road the Patrol is good, but not superb. The traction control is a little slow and ineffective compared to the current state of the art, and the car needs more clearance. The rear cross-axle locker appears to disable traction control on the front axle, but it's good that it's there. The adaptive terrain system makes little difference, although we'd need more time in different terrains to fully test it. As with any car of this size your line is limited due to the size, but that's not a Patrol criticism, just a general issue. The Patrol is a good off-roader and certainly can handle rough terrain, but is not quite up there with the likes of the Discovery 4 or Toyota Land Cruiser.

So why the disappointment? Because the Patrol has moved market segments from rough off-roader to a powerful tower, cruiser and big wagon. It's not bad at its new job, but not a classic, which will pick up awards and the hearts of the buying public. Perhaps that's why Nissan haven't pushed it any further than the Middle East, so will this be the last of the Patrol dynasty? **4x4**



Above: Patrol has selectable, electronic off-road terrain mode control

Above and right: Driven carefully, the latest Patrol still has ability when things get rough

