SOFTWARE & TECH

Nissan Altima Consumer Reports

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Introduction: The Nissan Altima Through the Lens of Consumer Reports

For decades, the mid-size sedan segment has been a battleground for automakers, and the Nissan Altima has consistently been a key player in that fight. If you are in the market for a practical, comfortable, and fuel-efficient sedan, the Altima almost certainly appears on your shortlist. However, before making a significant financial commitment, a thorough look at the data provided by a trusted, independent source is essential. This is where **Nissan Altima Consumer Reports**insights become invaluable. Consumer Reports (CR) is renowned for its unbiased testing, extensive owner surveys, and long-term reliability data. This article will delve deep into what CR has reported, offering a balanced view of the Altima's strengths, weaknesses, and overall value proposition. We will explore everything from predicted reliability and road-test scores to owner satisfaction and common complaints, providing a roadmap for any potential buyer.

Overall Consumer Reports Score and Ranking

Consumer Reports employs a comprehensive scoring system that combines road-test performance, predicted reliability, owner satisfaction, and safety. The Nissan Altima has historically received mixed but generally favorable scores. For recent model years, the Altima typically scores in the mid-to-high 70s out of 100. This places it competitively within the midsize car category, though it often trails class leaders like the Honda Accord and Toyota Camry by a few points. A key takeaway from the **Nissan Altima Consumer Reports**data is that while the car is enjoyable to drive and comfortable, its reliability ratings can be a point of contention, causing its overall score to fluctuate depending on the model year.

Road Test Performance

One area where the Altima consistently shines in CR evaluations is the road test. Consumer Reports testers frequently praise the Altima for its comfortable ride quality and responsive handling. The steering is often described as well-weighted, and the cabin remains quiet even at highway speeds. The availability of all-wheel drive (AWD), a rarity in the segment, adds a significant safety and traction advantage. The standard 2.5-liter four-cylinder engine provides adequate acceleration for daily driving, while the optional VC-Turbo (Variable Compression Turbo) engine offers more spirited performance, though it can be noisier. In CR's real-world fuel economy tests, the Altima with the 2.5-liter engine frequently achieves excellent numbers, often exceeding its EPA estimates, which is a strong selling point for budget-conscious buyers.

Predicted Reliability: The Core of the Consumer Reports Analysis

Perhaps the most scrutinized element of any **Nissan Altima Consumer Reports**review is its predicted reliability rating. Reliability scores are derived from data collected from thousands of vehicle owners through CR's Annual Auto Survey. This survey asks about problems in 17 different trouble areas, from minor issues like squeaks and rattles to major faults like engine and transmission problems.

Historical Trends in Reliability

The reliability story of the Altima is a tale of two eras. The older generation models (roughly 2013-2018) were plagued by well-documented issues with the continuously variable transmission (CVT). These problems led to poor reliability ratings and low owner satisfaction. However, with the sixth-generation Altima introduced for the 2019 model year, Nissan made significant improvements to its CVT. Consumer Reports data for 2019, 2020, and 2021 models showed a marked improvement. The predicted reliability for these years jumped to average or even above average. However, it is worth noting that CR does not always give the Altima top marks in this category. More recent model years have seen a slight regression in some areas, particularly concerning in-car electronics and body integrity (wind noise, water leaks). A potential buyer must look at the year-by-year data. For instance, the **Nissan Altima Consumer Reports**reliability score for the 2022 model was average, while the 2021 model was rated slightly higher.

Common Problem Areas According to Owner Surveys

- Transmission (CVT): While much improved, the CVT is still the most commonly cited area of concern among owners of older models. The 2013-2018 models have a significant number of reports regarding transmission shudder, hesitation, and premature failure.
- In-Car Electronics: Owners of the 2019+ models have reported glitches with the infotainment system, including screen freezing, Bluetooth connectivity drops, and slow response times from the NissanConnect interface.
- Climate System: Some reports indicate issues with the air conditioning system not cooling effectively, particularly in hotter climates.
- Body Hardware: Problems with window regulators and door latches have been noted sporadically across several model years.

Owner Satisfaction: Would They Buy It Again?

Beyond raw reliability data, Consumer Reports asks a crucial question: "Would you buy this car again?" This metric, known as the owner satisfaction score, is a powerful indicator of a car's overall success. For the Nissan Altima, the results have been surprisingly positive, even during the years of mediocre reliability. The 2023 and 2024 model years show a high owner satisfaction score, often over 70%, which is competitive within the segment. Owners consistently cite the comfortable front seats (a Nissan hallmark), the availability of AWD, the smooth ride, and the excellent fuel economy as reasons for their satisfaction. Even owners who experienced minor electronic glitches often express that they would repurchase the vehicle. This suggests that the Altima's core DNA of comfort and value outweighs its occasional mechanical shortcomings in the minds of many consumers.

Safety and Driver Assistance Features

Safety is another critical dimension of the **Nissan Altima Consumer Reports**evaluation. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) gives the Altima a 5-star overall safety rating for most recent model years. The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) also names the Altima a Top Safety Pick+, its highest award, provided the purchaser opts for models with the ProPILOT Assist system and specific headlights.

Standard Safety Technology

Nissan has been aggressive in making advanced safety tech standard across the Altima lineup. Every Altima comes equipped with Nissan Safety Shield 360, a suite of features that includes:

- Automatic Emergency Braking with Pedestrian Detection (forward and rear)
- Lane Departure Warning
- Blind Spot Warning

- Rear Cross Traffic Alert
- High Beam Assist

Consumer Reports rates the performance of these systems highly, noting that the automatic braking works effectively to prevent low-speed collisions. The ProPILOT Assist semi-autonomous driving system, available on higher trims, is also praised for reducing driver fatigue on long highway trips, though CR notes it is less sophisticated than systems from Ford (BlueCruise) or General Motors (Super Cruise).

Comparison with Key Competitors

To fully understand the **Nissan Altima Consumer Reports**analysis, it is useful to compare it with its primary rivals: the Honda Accord and Toyota Camry.

Altima vs. Honda Accord

The Honda Accord is a perennial favorite, consistently earning top scores from CR for its engaging driving dynamics, excellent reliability, and refined interior. The Accord typically outscores the Altima in road tests and predicted reliability. However, the Altima fights back with standard AWD (the Accord is FWD only) and a ride that many find to be more plush and comfortable for bumpy roads. The Accord is more fun to drive, while the Altima is more comfortable to ride in.

Altima vs. Toyota Camry

The Toyota Camry is the benchmark for reliability. In CR's data, the Camry almost always earns the highest predicted reliability score in the class. The Camry also offers excellent fuel economy, especially with its hybrid variant. The Altima matches the Camry in comfort but falls slightly short in long-term dependability. However, the Altima often undercuts the Camry in price when similarly equipped, and its standard AWD gives it a compelling advantage for buyers in snowy climates.

Which Nissan Altima Model Year is Best? A Consumer Reports Perspective

Based on the aggregated data from Consumer Reports and other trusted sources, the best used Nissan Altima to buy is a 2021 or 2022 model. These years represent the sweet spot in the current generation. They benefited from the engineering refinements made after the 2019 redesign, showing improved reliability compared to earlier models, but without the steep depreciation of a brand-new car. If you are on a very tight budget, look for a well-maintained 2019, but be aware of the potential for early adopter issues with the new generation. It is generally recommended to avoid the 2013-2018 models unless you are prepared for potential CVT issues, even if the price is attractive.

The Value Proposition: Price, Fuel Economy, and Resale

One of the strongest arguments for considering the Altima is its value. Consumer Reports data confirms that the Altima's average transaction price is often lower than the Accord or Camry, making it a more accessible entry point to the midsize sedan market.

Fuel Economy

In CR's own track testing, the Altima 2.5 consistently achieves around 35-38 mpg in mixed driving, which is excellent for a non-hybrid car. This translates to significant long-term savings for owners. The optional turbo engine is less efficient, achieving closer to 30 mpg overall.

Resale Value

Historically, the Altima has not held its value as well as a Toyota or Honda. This is due in part to its less stellar

reliability reputation from the previous generation. For a new car buyer, this means higher depreciation in the first few years. However, for a used car buyer, this is an advantage, as you can get a very good, relatively modern car for a lower price than an equivalent Camry or Accord.

Common Complaints and How to Mitigate Them

A thorough **Nissan Altima Consumer Reports**review is not complete without addressing the pain points. Beyond the CVT issues, owners have reported the following:

1. Cabin Materials: The interior uses a lot of hard plastics on lower trims. This can lead to squeaks and rattles over time. Solution: Upgrade to a mid-level or higher trim like the SV or SL for better materials.
2. Wind Noise: Some owners of the 2019+ models report excessive wind noise from the A-pillars and windows at highway speeds. Solution: This is a design issue. Checking for proper door and window seal alignment at the dealer is the only practical mitigation.
3. Comfort with AWD: While AWD is great for snow, it slightly reduces fuel economy and can make the car feel a bit more ponderous in handling compared to the FWD version. Solution: Only buy the AWD if you genuinely need it for inclement weather.

Conclusion: Is the Nissan Altima a Smart Buy in 2025?

Looking at the totality of the **Nissan Altima Consumer Reports**data, the answer is a qualified yes. The current generation Altima is a vastly improved vehicle over its predecessor. It offers a class-leading comfortable ride, standard AWD, excellent fuel economy, and a high level of standard safety features. While it may not match the Camry's legendary reliability or the Accord's driving dynamism, it carves out its own niche as the comfort and value leader of the segment. The key is to be an informed buyer. Opt for a 2021 or newer model year to benefit from the best reliability, ensure you understand the trade-offs of the CVT, and enjoy the ride. For drivers who prioritize a quiet, smooth, and well-equipped daily commuter that can handle snow and ice, the Nissan Altima remains a compelling and intelligent choice.

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