

2013 Nissan 370Z Touring Sport Review & Test Drive

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‘YOU DON’T MESS WITH A GOOD THING’

The new 2013 Nissan 370Z Touring with the new Sport Package is pure sports car. While Nissan engineers and stylists added refinement and suspension upgrades, they didn’t mess too much with this long standing icon from Nissan. Since the original 1970Z was first introduced, Nissan’s goal has been to keep the design moving forward. The changes for 2013, though subtle, go a long way in enhancing the 370Z’s dynamic appearance inside and out. It remains one of the world’s best pure two-seat sports car values with a price starting at \$37,820.00 for the coupe with a six-speed manual.

To keep the legendary sports car fresh to look at and dynamic and exciting to drive are the updates for 2013. They include the addition of a revised front fascia with vertical LED running lights, a red reflector is added to the rear fascia that replaces the black center cover, and a new 19 inch wheel package for the Sport Package that I tested. Also new for the Sport package are red-finished brake calipers, new dark fuel gauge trim, Euro-tuned gas-charged shock absorbers and the new Magma Red paint scheme that my test 370Z came wrapped in. The other new paint color is Midnight Blue.

The styling is dynamic with dual benefits-an aggressive appearance and a light, highly rigid structure for incredible performance. The taut exterior design incorporates intentional 240Z styling cues, a sleek aerodynamic shape, a ‘dynamic motion’ feel with a dramatic cantilevered roof and a ‘low visual gravity’. The 370Z coupe’s FM (front mid-mounted) platform provides a refined foundation for the well-proportioned body with a 100.4 inch wheelbase, a 167.2 inch overall length, 72.6 inch width and a very low 51.8 inch height, giving it a classic sports car look and feel. The body features aluminum door panels, hood and hatch. A die cast aluminum alloy front suspension cradle, steel rear structural subframe, 3-point strut tower brace on top of the engine, an underbody ‘V-bar’ and an aluminum tubular brace just behind the bucket seats from the driver’s side to the passenger side, are designed to reduce front and rear lateral bending. The design also uses carbon fiber composite radiator housing, a carbon fiber composite drive shaft, and strengthened rear fender and hatch areas. This makes the new 370Z coupe one of the most rigid sports cars on the road and I felt it whenever I turned the sporty, tilting, leather-wrapped steering wheel and the reaction from the world-class fully independent suspension system.

Looking from the side it is defined by its upswept quarter window that is echoed by the dynamic upward curvature in the lower rocker panel and the sense of the taut sheet metal molding itself around the wheels and frame. Another distinctive feature of the bold exterior design is the headlight/taillight treatment, which features a fierce 'boomerang' shape. HID bi-functional xenon headlights with auto on/off feature, and the new vertical LED daytime running lamps. The vertical aluminum flush pull-out door handles remain unique to the 370Z. The intense broad-shouldered rear shape is highlighted by the integration of the boomerang taillights and the wide, flared fenders. The large 19 inch tires fill any gap between the wheel-wells and tires to enhance stability and aerodynamics. Attention to detail is seen with a flashing (repeater lamp) side marker lamp/emblem. The 0.29 co-efficient of drag is very good and provides zero lift and zero rear lift when equipped with the Sport Package's rear spoiler, including the 'inverse area' front bumper design which smoothes the flow of air to the sides while the rear design maximizes the control of airflow from the roof to the rear hatch. The Sport Package also comes with a front chin spoiler and the aforementioned rear spoiler.

The engine is backed up by a choice of a standard advanced close-ratio six-speed manual including an optional (standard with the Sport Package) synchronized downshift rev matching system, that allowed me to experience professional-like gear-shift performance. The SynchroRev Match function automatically controls and adjusts engine speed when shifting to the exact speed of the next gear position, essentially 'blipping' the throttle to smooth out any up/down shifts. This not only allows me to focus more on braking and steering, it improves the smoothness of gear shifts by reducing the typical 'shock' when the clutch is engaged. The system can be deactivated with a push of a button next to the shifter for those who prefer to shift on their own. This system is only found on world-class sports cars with manual transmissions costing thousands of dollars more. Optional is the 370Z's 7-speed automatic transmission with Downshift Rev Matching and Adaptive Shift Control. Unfortunately it wasn't available when I tested the new 2013 370Z coupe Touring Sport.

It is great fun to work the six-speed manual for strong acceleration at launch, cutting through slow city and highway traffic, and when on the backroads chasing steep curving roads. It is only made more fun, enjoyable and exciting with the new 370Z's Touring Sport's awesome, world-class suspension system.

Up front is a double-wishbone setup that uses lightweight forged aluminum arms, a lightweight rigid aluminum-alloy cradle as mentioned before, and hollow construction stabilizer bar along with sport-tuned coil springs and new 'high-response' gas-charged shocks at each corner with ride comfort enhanced through reduced shock friction. The rear is a multi-link setup that is also stiffer and lighter than before with the rear cradle entirely integrated into a single part (no welding). The rear also features the Euro-tuned shocks, coil springs and stabilizer bar. Enhancing grip and traction that makes the new 2013 370Z Touring Sport such a thrill to drive is the new 19X9 front and 19X10 inch 5-twin-pronged, Ray's forged lightweight aluminum-alloy wheels that are wrapped with Bridgestone. 245/40R19 front and 275/35R19 inch Potenza low-profile, super-high-performance tires. The near 50/50 front/rear weight distribution gives the suspension a true neutral feel when putting the car through its paces on the road or on the track. The hard launch from 0mph to 60mph takes just 5.1sec. That quickness is enhanced from the grip of the 9 and 10 inch wide tires put down on the pavement via the viscous coupled limited slip differential.

The vehicle-speed-sensitive power-assisted rack & pinion steering system is a perfect match and provides improved response. Unwanted steering kickback and vibrations are reduced through the use of a solenoid valve that acts like a damper when there is a harsh impact load. Keeping you on track during very spirited driving times is the standard vehicle dynamic control that works with the traction control system to minimize oversteer and understeer, but of course you can turn the systems off and let the car slide at the apex of a sharp curve to really get my heart pumping. The suspension and steering system is so responsive, like a racecar, it response so quickly and precisely to my steering wheel inputs. The steering ratio is 13:7.1 and 2.7 turn's lock-to-lock.

Safely slowing the new 370Z Touring Sport down from speed are large, power-assisted steel disc brakes. Up front are 14 inch vented discs clamped with four-piston calipers and 13.8 inch vented discs clamped with dual-piston calipers in the rear. Power and control is enhanced with standard ABS, BA and EBD.

The new 2013 Nissan 370Z Touring with the Sport Package is truly an exciting two-seat sports car to drive. It comes with all of the attributes that make for a world-class sports car: power, performance, handling, braking and unique styling.

The exciting feel is brought inside with a cockpit that is equipped to make car and driver feel like one. The traditional 2-seat layout is built around a deeply scooped instrument panel with soft-to-the-touch materials including a full-length center console that separates you and your passenger's seat. The design focus incorporates a 'layer concept' with an information layer, and operation layer and a holding layer.

The information layer provides good visibility with easy access to all key data. The gauges are attached to the steering column so you don't have to choose between their preferred steering wheel position and visibility of the gauges. The large upper steering wheel opening in front of the gauges is designed to provide a good view of the readouts. The instrument panel retains the traditional 3-pod cluster with oil temperature, voltmeter and clock, while the 180mph speedometer and 9,000rpm tachometer include an 'initial sweep' function, coming alive when the Z is first started. The fuel gauge/trip computer meter finish has been changed to a new dark finish for 2013.

The operation layer includes the steering wheel and shifter and switchgear. The steering wheel is an 'oval' 3-spoke design which offers a baseball-style stitching and large thumb and palm rest areas to provide a more kidney-like shape to better fit in my hands. The manual transmission shifter is padded in different areas to improve the accuracy of diagonal shifts and to feel softer in the hand for forward and backward motions.

The holding layer includes the seats, knee pads and door trim support. The driver's seat is uniquely different from the passenger's seat with lower seat cushion cut-outs on the sides where the thighs rest-allowing me to push on the pedals without the seat fighting them. The seat frame is constructed to help hold me in place during cornering. Both the driver and passenger seats are structured with an anti-slip material in the main seating surface. My Touring Sport model came with leather-trimmed/synthetic suede sport seats that are deeply cut. The driver's seat is 4-way power adjustable with adjustable lumbar support. Adjustable front seat Active Head Restraints are also standard in the Touring Sport model. The door armrests have been designed to provide extra support when cornering and the kneepads are integrated to help me maintain proper position while the 370Z eats up hard corners.

Standard interior comfort and convenience features in my Touring Sport model includes Nissan Intelligent Key with push button start/stop, power windows with one-touch up/down, power door locks, a center console box with a non-intrusive cover design and padded armrest, automatic climate control, rear window defroster with timer, two 12-volt power outlets, three cupholders, dual overhead map lights, dual lighted vanity mirrors, a 6C Bose audio system with eight speakers and two subwoofers, MP3/WMA playback, SiriusXM satellite radio, Bluetooth hands-free phone system, HomeLink Universal Transceiver, auto-dimming rearview mirror, power-remote/heated side mirrors, heated seats, kick plate with Z emblem, trip computer, cruise control, vehicle speed-sensitive wipers/washers, aluminum-trimmed foot pedals/dead foot rest, retractable cargo cover, and the Nissan Hard Drive Navigation system with a 7-inch VGA touch-sensitive display, USB connectivity and iPod connection, NavTraffic with Real Time Traffic Information and NavWeather, automatic phonebook, Bluetooth streaming audio and RearView Monitor.

Standard safety features to keep me and my passenger safe in the event of an accident include driver/front passenger front, side-impact and curtain airbags, 3-point safety belts with pretensioners/load limiters, vehicle security system with immobilizer, front/rear crumple zones with steel beams in each door, one anchor for the LATCH child seat and tire pressure monitoring system.

I truly enjoyed my seven-day test drive at the wheel of the new 2013 Nissan 370Z Touring Sport machine. It is a true sports car, no turbo or supercharger to get in the way of the high-tech powerful V6 engine that revs up to 7,000rpm, a high-tech 6-speed manual transmission turning the rear wheels with a limited slip differential, world-class fully independent suspension system, big, strong vented disc brakes at all four-corners with a unique look and racecar-styled cockpit. It is a thrill to drive and enjoy every day.





