

Buying your first car? The Datsun GO is what you need

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It's the start of 2019. You've just started your first job, or even starting university, but the commute is a bit of a battle - then the Datsun GO is certainly what you need to 'GO' around.

With the return of the brand to the country, the Datsun GO is the first offering from the manufacturers bearing the redesigned and modernised Datsun brand to take to Africa's roads since the early 1980s. Not only is it a re-entry into the South African market, but it also marks the manufacturer's entry into the entry-level segment.

In the 80s, the Datsun name was associated with vehicles that offered quality and reliability; at an affordable price for their owners. The Datsun GO is somewhat an obvious choice for the younger, first-time buyers or people looking for a comfortable and reliable vehicle, that is fuel efficient, to get you from A to B - when public transport fails us, as it does for many South Africans.

Sales of the Datsun GO began in October 2018, and to date, almost 2000 units have been sold through the 44 dealerships across the country.

Datsun dealerships will exist within the Nissan dealer framework with a mix of dedicated and common showroom configurations. The Datsun sales experience will be unique, but the level of after-sales service will be leveraged off the existing Nissan dealer network.



The fully imported cars taking back their place on South Africa's roads has been imported as completely assembled units from India, where the Datsun GO became a feature in early 2014. Since then it has also made its entry into Indonesia.

Just what first-time new car buyers need

The decision to launch the Datsun GO to spearhead Datsun's return to South Africa was based on the identified needs of the market in South Africa, seen as first-time new car buyers who were looking for an affordable vehicle that offered modern styling and great economy.

At the launch of the Datsun GO, we trekked from the Culinary Table near Lanseria Airport, through Soweto, making our way through Johannesburg CBD and back to Lanseria Airport. A typical route for anyone living outside the city centre, who doesn't yet have the means to relocate closer to work.

We're reminded that the Datsun Go is targeted at those who have spent their lives using South Africa's unreliable and unsafe public transport, and who now want to take a step up and get their own set of affordable wheels.

What to expect?

The five-speed manual Datsun GO weighs in at 1,152kgs. It is powered by a DOHC 12-valve, three-cylinder, fuel injected

petrol engine with a displacement of 1,198cc. Maximum power of 50kW is delivered at 5,000 rpm, Torque is a respectable 104 Nm produced at 4,000 rpm. Fuel consumption is 5.2 litres per 100km in a combined urban and rural cycle.

From my experience, the Datsun Go is a noticeably lightweight vehicle and at times does struggle to gain momentum, but that's to be expected with any entry-level vehicle.

With the wheelbase of 2,450 mm, the Datsun GO is 3,785mm from bumper to bumper, being 1,485 mm tall and 1635 mm wide. With its tall body, wide stance and class-leading ground clearance of 170 mm, I have to add that the vehicle definitely feels stable on the road and handles challenging road surfaces without difficulty - from my experience at the launch.

One of the advantages of the car's height is that it has an upright comfortable driving position, which allows you to have a better view of the road and your surrounding area.

What's inside?

In keeping with the Datsun design ethos, the interior of the Datsun GO is certainly modern, with a simple, functional and chic look.

The cockpit has three distinct zones and features leather feel grain patterns and three contrasting colours to add to its updated modern feel.

The driver's control is through a comfortable, three-spoke steering wheel ahead of the simple but effective single instrument cluster. Sporting distinctive white and blue colouring for the large speedometer, the combination meter also incorporates a smart meter comprising a digital tachometer and gear shift guide and drive computer. The gear shift guide, marked on the speedometer, shows the recommended timing for each gear change according to the vehicle speed, which is definitely handy, especially for first-time drivers who are still a bit nervous on the road.

What is unique, well, uncomfortable at first, is the gear lever and parking brake handle, which are mounted in the centre console. It felt a bit too high for me at first, but as a driver, you adjust to it very easily.





What I learned is, the benefit of housing the gear lever and parking brake in the centre console is the opportunity to adopt 'connected' front seats. Instead of a raised centre console – or even a void – between the two front seats, Datsun GO features a clever 'assist' surface that links the two.

Not intended to be used as an extra seat in the front, the surface is instead seen as a convenient place to store goods – bags, coats, maps and so forth – so that they are close at hand, rather than placing them in the luggage area or on the floor - that's how accidents happen when reaching for your goods.

It's cute from outside...

The design of the vehicle is distinctive. After the launch, I could notice a Datsun Go from just about anywhere. For any first time motorist, you want a car that's not only economically friendly but also easy on the eye. And the Datsun Go is just that, with a choice of five shades of sky, white, grey, silver and ruby.



The 'D-cut grille' is noticeable and just adds a bit of class to the vehicle. The large fully integrated three-dimensional headlight assemblies flank the streamlined bonnet. They also accentuate the starting point for strong shoulder lines which run from the front wings to midway through the rear door. Here, they meet a bold 'flick' which curves towards the tailgate above the rear light assemblies. The side window outline features stylised 'brackets' at either end, establishing a distinctive styling cue.

For those weekend road trips with newly made friends at the office or university, the luggage volume of 265 litres is also best in the class. The vehicle is also fully carpeted throughout and features fabric seats.

Features

Although the new Datsun GO is to be offered at a very attractive price, there are some notable features worth mentioning:

- Datsun GO features an Intelligent Wiping System (IWS). As well as a continuous wiper setting, there is an intermittent setting. But rather than having a set delay between sweeps of the blade, IWS varies the wiping interval depending on the speed of the vehicle.
- The manufacturer has equipped Datsun GO with a 7-inch touchscreen infotainment system that does much more than just a simple audio system. The car comes with a unique Mobile Docking Station (MDS) that allows an owner to sync the driver's smartphone directly with the car. Instead of being restricted to a radio and, perhaps, a CD player, the new Datsun owner has access to satellite navigation, hands-free telephone, USB charger, music player and radio all accessed via the smartphone.



The MDS simply slots the smartphone into a holder in the centre of the dashboard which can be paired by an AUX cable to the car's system and the car's integrated door mounted loudspeakers. The system is far more versatile than conventional audio and is totally future proof: by accessing the internet via the smartphone, radio can even be streamed into the cabin.

- Reverse parking assist sensors make parking easy, even in the toughest of conditions.
- Dual airbags. In the event of a front-end crash, the driver and passenger airbags, in conjunction with the seat belt, help minimise the impact on the driver and passenger from the collision. When the airbag automatically deploys and inflates in a front-end crash, it mitigates serious head injuries.
- 'Follow Me Home' lights to ensure that the way ahead is illuminated even if the car has been switched off and locked. How this works is that as the driver leaves the car he or she simply pulls the headlamp flasher to illuminate the headlights which automatically switch themselves off after a predetermined period: one pull leaves the lights on for 30 seconds, two pulls for one minute, three for 90 seconds and four for two minutes. Ensuring you have light as you leave the vehicle to get to your destination safely.

All this? For how much?

- Datsun GO Mid Spec: R144,500
- Datsun GO Lux Spec: R165,500
- Datsun GO+ 7-seater Mid: R154,200
- Datsun GO+ 7-seater Lux: R175, 900
- Datsun GO+ Panel Van: R155, 200

A three-year 100 000km warranty with roadside assistance comes as standard, and owners can choose a range of service and maintenance plans to suit their needs.

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