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ROAD LIFE

SIMPLE SUV CONVERSION

NISSAN XTERRA

ROAD LIFE: AN EXPERIMENT

- ▶ For fourteen months, I lived out of my 4x4 Nissan Xterra. My decision to live on the road was a personal experiment in stretching my comfort zone, so I opted not to invest in a full build. Instead, I found small ways to make my SUV feel like home.



- ▶ In the end, I loved living on the road and decided to sell my Xterra and custom build a sprinter van. If you're flirting with the same idea, here are some tips for converting your SUV to try out road life before fully committing. I've listed actual products I used in my Nissan Xterra, but there are countless options and ideas to consider when outfitting your own vehicle! Hopefully this will be a useful starting point in deciding what works best for you.

THE VEHICLE

- ▶ I owned two different Nissan Xterra models during my time on the road: a 2009 Off-Road 4x4 and a 2008 4x4 SE Sport Utility. I loved the Xterra for its many flat surfaces, off road capabilities and pre-installed steel hooks. Both models came with a hidden interior storage compartment and pre-mounted rails that made it super easy to install a roof box.

EVERYTHING ELSE

▶ **BED**

To maximize space, I removed the second row of passenger seats & headrests; then laid the backrests flat. I used scissors to custom fit a 3" mattress topper. I wanted to feel as comfortable as possible - so I bought a twin version of the same down comforter and duvet cover I had in my apartment. I kept my king size down pillow, and it's probably my number one road life hack.

Items used: [3" Latex Twin Mattress Topper](#), [Twin Mattress Cover](#), [Alternative Down Twin Comforter](#), [Microfiber Twin Duvet Cover](#), [Down Pillow](#), [Microfiber Twin Sheet Set](#), [Alaska Bear Silk Sleep Mask](#)

▶ **FOOD STORAGE & COOKING**

Behind the driver's seat, I stored two stacked plastic bins for food, kitchen items and stove fuel. My 3 gallon water tank fit back there as well. For perishables, I kept a cooler behind the passenger seat. For cooking, I used a Jetboil & one burner stove. I also kept a small folding table + chair in the roof rack, along with a full-size pan and various cooking utensils.

Items used: [Jetboil Stove](#), [Coleman Portable Butane Stove](#), [Insulated Yeti Rambler](#), [CamelBak KickBack Tumbler](#), [Redcamp Aluminum Folding Table](#), [Helinox Ultralight Compact Camping Chair](#), [YETI Roadie 20 Cooler](#), [BPA-Free Reusable Plastic 3 Gallon Water Tank](#), [Brabantia 6L Waste Bin](#), [UNNI 100% Compostable Trash Bags](#), [AeroPress Coffee & Espresso Maker](#), [Bamboo Flatware Set](#), [8" Stone Earth Frying Pan](#), [Ceramic Chef's Knife with Sheath Cover](#)

▶ **POWER & LIGHTING**

I'm off the grid pretty often, so I needed a way to stay powered. I found that an inverter + Goal Zero Yeti 400 worked really well. I also used power banks for my phone and kindle. For lighting, I ran a string of LED lights along the interior of the truck. They made my truck feel like home, and even came with a remote control. I also kept a few other lighting options on hand as backup.

Items used: [Goal Zero Yeti 400 Lithium Portable Power Station](#), [BESTEK 300W Power Inverter DC 12V to 110V AC Car Inverter](#), [Anker PowerCore 13000 Portable Charger](#), [Goal Zero Sherpa 15](#), [LED lights](#), [Goal Zero solar powered crush light](#), [Black Diamond headlamp](#)

▶ **CLOTHING STORAGE**

For about 6 months, I used packing cubes to organize my clothes and I hung those from carabiners. That worked pretty well but I eventually bought a hanging linen closet and a few collapsible cloth drawers. I found it was way more convenient to have an actual drawer system, and it hung perfectly from the steel roof hooks. I stored bulkier & seasonal items in waterproof bags and kept them in the roof box.

Items used: [Hanging Linen Closet](#), [Linen Storage Box](#), [Foldable Linen Storage Cubes](#), [Sea to Summit Lightweight Dry Sack](#), [Eddie Bauer Large Packing Cubes](#), [Carabiners](#), [Bungee Cords](#) (can also pick up singles at most hardware stores)

▶ **BATHROOM & TOILETRIES**

I paid for a gym membership so that I could workout and shower every day if I wanted to. I kept full size shampoo/conditioner, etc in my door storage, and hung a small backpack on a carabiner in the back with all my gym/shower supplies. I used a linen box to store all my other toiletries (baby wipes will be your new best friend!)

Items used: [Rainleaf Microfiber Towel](#), [Eddie Bauer Packing Squares](#), [Folding Mirror](#)

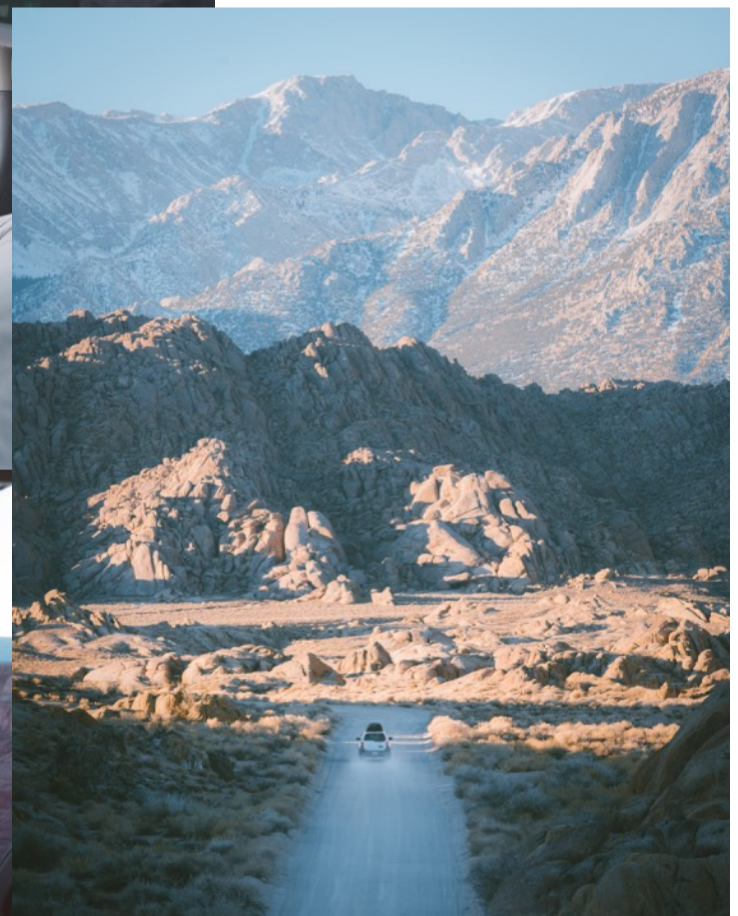
▶ **NAVIGATION & PROTECTION**

As a female traveller, the first question people usually ask is...but do you feel safe? I do feel safe, but that has a lot to do with my own personal experiences and the boundaries I've created as a result. I always trust my gut, and very rarely take risks when it comes to safety. I personally have a few methods of defense on hand at all times. I've listed some items below, but not everything. There is no black and white answer to this question...simply do what feels right for you.

▶ **NAVIGATION & PROTECTION (cont)**

I think it's important to be as self-reliant as possible when you're on the road. That alone can reduce 90% of most unwanted interactions and/or exposure. Leave a spare set of keys with a friend or family member, even if they live far away. You can always have them shipped overnight. I use Google Maps for navigation, and share my location with a parent at all times. I rely on an unlimited data & roaming plan so I can hot-spot my laptop and work from anywhere, and never worry about running up the phone bill. I recommend keeping a compact tool kit on hand, as well as a first aid kit. More importantly...know how to use them. I also carried a collapsible shovel, traction pads, tire inflator, usb powered jump starter, snow chains, tow strap and a windshield repair kit. Practice changing your spare tire. Stay on top of oil changes and general maintenance, and be aware of your vehicle's height clearance and limitations.

Items used: Cell Phone Mount, TaoTronics Bluetooth Receiver, Aluminum Sport Utility Shovel, X-BULL Traction Tracks, Snow Chains, 12V DC Portable Air Compressor Pump & Digital Tire Inflator, Windshield Repair Kit, RHINO Tow Strap, NOCO Boost XL GB50 1500 Amp 12V Lithium Jump Starter, Bear Spray, Gerber Paraframe II Knife, Gerber Suspension Multi-Plier



▸ MISC

The crown jewel of my setup was my rooftop cargo box. I threw everything up there that didn't add to the ambiance below - camping gear, dirty hiking boots, extra clothes, etc. Another essential - rain guards. They allow you to ventilate the car even when it's raining, and they're also super helpful when you want to be stealth. Cracked windows can be a dead giveaway, but rain guards completely conceal that.

It helps to have your passenger & rear windows tinted. For added privacy, I bought a windshield sunshade and made curtains for my rear and side windows - no sewing machine necessary. I picked up some black out curtains and cut them myself to fit each window. To hold them in place, I used quarter-sized magnets. It worked really well, and I found that labeling each piece with a sharpie (i.e. front passenger window) helped me put them up quickly at night. I used cheap foam board and black electric tape to black out the smaller rear windows. They fit snug and were easy to store beneath the mattress topper during the day.

During summer months, I used sunshades on the back passenger windows (to act as mosquito netting) and used wire mesh + magnets to create a large screen on the rear door. I only used the screen when I was at an actual campsite or park, and I never kept the rear door open at night. It was perfect for hanging out (bug free) in the vehicle during the day.

Items used: [Thule Force XT Rooftop Cargo Box \(Large\)](#), [Genuine Nissan Accessories Window Deflector](#) (rain guards), [Side Window Sunshades](#) (mosquito net), [Earth Magnets](#), Custom Cut Wire Mesh (pick up at any hardware store), [Black Out Fabric](#), [Skullcandy Water-resistant Bluetooth Portable Speaker](#), [\(2\) 20x30 Black Foam Boards](#) (Target or any craft store)

Finally, expect the unexpected. Road life can be incredibly beautiful, and also incredibly challenging. It's why I love living on the road... I have the chance to learn something new everyday. Hopefully this has been helpful, I receive a small commission for some of these items if purchased directly from the links in this pdf. Thanks for your support!

