



JAPAN 1969-1996

# Datsun 240Z to 300ZX

**Timeline • Timeline • Timeline**



NUMBER 11

Produced by  
Nissan Motor Co.,  
Tokyo, Japan



**I**N THE 1970s, Datsun came from nowhere to produce the world's best-selling sports car, the handsome and capable 240Z. It was a huge success in the U.S., where it took over from classic British sports cars. In the last 30 years, the 240Z developed into larger bloated versions before finding its way again and becoming the 300ZX.



Above: The 260Z was so fast that the Japanese police used them for high-speed patrol cars.



Above: Datsun made sports cars before the 240Z. This is the 2000 driven by Risto Virtapuro in the 1969 Monte Carlo Rally.



Left: Initial design of the 240Z was by Count Albrecht von Goertz, who was also responsible for the BMW 503 and 507. It was designed with the U.S. market in mind.



The 300ZX Turbo was extremely fast, with a convenient targa top.



# Datsun 240Z to 300ZX Timeline

1965 1966 1967 1968 1969 1970 1971 1972 1973 1974 1975

## THE PEDIGREE

There was straightforward development from the 240Z to the 260Z and, in the U.S., the fuel-injected 280Z. The cars got steadily heavier and engine size increased progressively from 2.4 to 2.8 liters to compensate. The first fundamental changes, followed in the shape of the new 280ZX which evolved into the V6 300ZX. The 1990s 300ZX was a totally new and infinitely superior design.

1969

### 240Z ENGINE

Developed from a sedan engine, the L24 2,393-cc, overhead-cam, six cylinder is an iron-block, alloy-head, 12-valve unit with twin carburetors. The SAE gross measurement of power exaggerates its output at 151 bhp.



1969

### DATSUN 240Z

It is first seen in 1969 and launched in the U.S. in 1970 with a 2,393-cc, straight-six engine and four-wheel independent suspension. Top speed is a fraction over 124 mph with 0-60 mph taking only 8.4 seconds.



1969

### FAIRLADY Z

For the Japanese market only, Datsun sells the Z as the Fairlady with a smaller, 1,998-cc, six-cylinder engine with smaller bore and stroke. Japanese models have distinctive mirrors mounted at the front of both fenders.



1973

### DATSUN 260Z

The switch to a larger, 2,565-cc version of the 240Z engine brings a name change to 260Z. The bigger engine is needed to restore power lost through increasing emissions standards and it produces 139 bhp.



1973

### DATSUN 260Z 2+2

The wheelbase increases by 12 inches and longer doors are installed to allow for the occasional rear seats. The slightly improved suspension from the 260Z is used but the heavier 2+2 is slower than the two-seater.



## HIGH PERFORMERS

The Z cars were never short on performance—the engines were so strong and the chassis was capable of taking so much more power that high-performance versions were easily produced. This was demonstrated when Nissan turned to turbocharging, first with the 280ZX and then the first 300ZX, followed by the twin-turbo 300ZX of the 1990s.

1969

### FAIRLADY Z432

This Japan-only competition model has a 24-valve, twin-cam version of the 2-liter six which gives 160 bhp. Only 420 are built and some are used by the Japanese police as high-speed patrol cars.



*The Z badge was a perfect example of fussy, Oriental styling with the letter Z representing the ultimate (as the last letter in the alphabet).*



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1975

**DATSUN 280Z**

A U.S.-only model with Bosch L-Jetronic fuel injection to comply with emissions standards. Engine size goes up to 2,753 cc and power to 149 bhp with 163 lb-ft of torque.



1978

**DATSUN 280ZX 2+2**

Although there is a two-seater 280ZX, the heavier 280ZX 2+2 with 8-inch longer wheelbase is more popular. The car has turned into a softer grand tourer model by this stage rather than a full-blown sports car.



1973

**DATSUN 260Z 2+2**

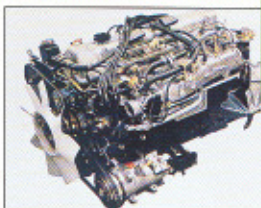
The wheelbase increases by 12 inches and longer doors are installed to allow for the occasional rear seats. The slightly improved suspension from the 260Z is used but the heavier 2+2 is slower than the two-seater.



1975

**L28 ENGINE**

To make up for further power-sapping emissions equipment, the 260Z engine is enlarged to 2,753 cc. Fuel injection replaces the twin Hitachi carburetors and power increases to a low emissions 249 bhp at 5,600 rpm with torque rising to 162 lb-ft.



1978

**DATSUN 280ZX**

An all-new model sharing no common body panels but the same engine, the 280ZX is longer, wider and heavier. It is more luxurious and less sporty, but still reasonably quick with a 121 mph top speed.



CONTINUED OVERLEAF

1973

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1980

**240Z 'G-NOSE'**

Although there is a wide variety of aerodynamic aids and spoilers for the 240Z, Nissan offers its own 'G-nose' kit. This incorporates an extended nose, faired-in headlights and flared out wheel arches.



1981

**DATSUN 280ZX TURBO**

Designed for the crucial U.S. market, the 280ZX Turbo has a modified straight-six with new pistons, a Garrett TB03 turbo and electronic fuel injection to give 180 bhp, a top speed of 129 mph and 0-60 mph in 7.8 seconds.



CONTINUED OVERLEAF

## RACERS

Heavy and not particularly agile, the Datsun 240Z was still turned into a competitive rally car where its great strength and reliability helped it survive most events. It was most at home in the tough East African Safari Rally.

1970

**DATSUN 240Z**

The 240Z's rally career started in 1970. The cars have 200 bhp engines, limited slip differentials and bigger wheels. Best results are Edgar Hermann's Safari win in 1970 and Shekar Mehta's in 1973.



1971

**DATSUN 240Z**

Rather than run its own 'works' team, Datsun backs private teams running Datsun cars. In the hands of the BRE team, the 240Z wins the SCCA Championship two years running in 1971 and 1972.



CONTINUED OVERLEAF



# Datsun 240Z to 300ZX Timeline

1986 1987 1988 1989 1990 1991 1992 1993 1994 1995 1996

## THE PEDIGREE (CONTINUED)

1980

### NISSAN 280ZX TARGA

Nissan has never made a convertible Z car but modified the 2+2 versions of the 280ZX with Targa-style roof to let more light into the cockpit. It has two removable glass panels on either side of a central spine.



1983

### NISSAN 300ZX

Sharing its floorpan with the 280ZX, the 300ZX has a new, aerodynamically superior body. More important is a new 3-liter V6 producing 170 bhp and giving a top speed of 125 mph, with 60 mph arriving in 9.2 seconds.



1990

### NISSAN 300ZX

All new, the 1990 300ZX two-seater and 2+2 had a 2,960-cc, quad-cam, 24-valve, V6 engine, a development of that used in the last of the 300Zs. In normally-aspirated form on the U.S. market, it gives 222 bhp.



1990

### V6 TURBO ENGINE

This 3-liter iron-block/alloy-head, quad-cam, V6 has variable intake valve timing and individual ignition coils for each cylinder. Twin intercooled Garrett T2/25 turbos give a maximum of 300 bhp in some markets.



## HIGH PERFORMERS (CONTINUED)

1983

### NISSAN 300ZX TURBO

Turbocharging the 3-liter V6 engine boosts output to 228 bhp and turns the 300ZX into a very fast car, with a top speed of more than 140 mph and a 0-60 mph time of only 7.3 seconds.



1990

### NISSAN 300ZX TURBO

European spec Turbo has 280 bhp at 6,400 rpm, with 274 lb-ft of torque at 3,600 rpm. New wishbone suspension features high-speed rear-wheel steering. Top speed is around 155 mph with the 0-60 mph sprint taking only 5.8 seconds.



## RACERS (CONTINUED)

1975

### NISSAN 260Z TURBO

For Group 5 of the Dutch Touring Car Championship, Nissan Motors, Germany enters the 260Z Turbo. The turbocharger and other modifications push power to 500 bhp at 7,500 rpm and top speed to more than 180 mph.



1982

### NISSAN 280ZX TURBO

With six wins in ten races, Don Devendorf wins the IMSA GTO Championship in 1982 with a highly-modified 280ZX Turbo. It has vastly extended wheel arches, carbon fiber bodywork, rear wing and 580 bhp at 7,500 rpm. Top speed is 195 mph.



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