

Early reviews of the 280ZX were mixed. Some lamented the transformation the Z-car had made to a grand tourer, while others appreciated the improvements in refinement, comfort, and overall market appeal. The sales figures soon proved the [Nissan](#) designers right, with the 280ZX becoming a sales success.

In 1979 Datsun homologated a high-downforce "whale-tail" type spoiler for the Datsun 280ZX by producing 1,001 280ZX-R cars; this allowed for use of this aerodynamic aid in [IMSA](#) and [SCCA](#) racing.<sup>[5]</sup> These cars also had distinctive body decals and ZX-R logos. These cars were identical to the other cars of this year with the exception of the spoiler and decal package. Successful IMSA racer Don Devendorf was involved in the development of the spoiler.<sup>[6]</sup>

From 1980 onwards, the 280ZX was available with a T-bar roof (on both the two-seater and 2+2 body styles). The T-bar roof panels could be removed and stored in bags in the rear of the car.

In 1980, a limited edition "10th anniversary" car was released. Available in either black and gold or black and red two-tone paint, these cars came with leather seating, and other special trim features. A total of 3,000 of these cars were built - - 2,500 in black and gold, and 500 in red and black.

A [turbocharged](#) model, using the [L28ET](#) engine rated at 180 bhp (134 kW; 182 PS) at 5,600 rpm and 203 ft•lbs (275n•m) of torque at 2,800 rpm, was introduced to the US export market in 1981. At the same time the Japanese domestic market received [L20ET](#) (2 L turbo) in both manual and automatic transmissions. Nissan's concerns about the reliability of their own five-speed transmission when combined with the additional torque of the 2.8 L turbo engine, meant that no manual transmission was offered with the L28ET engine for the 1981 model year. Other export markets (Europe and Australia) continued to receive only the normally aspirated 2.8 L engine with manual or automatic transmission. This engine was considered too powerful to receive type approval by Japan's Ministry of Transportation, who would only allow turbochargers to be installed in sub 2 litre-engined cars, and it was therefore never sold in its homeland.<sup>[7]</sup>

The turbocharged 280ZX used a single [Garrett AiResearch](#) TB03 turbocharger with an internal wastegate, and no [intercooler](#). Nissan's design philosophy at the time led to boost being limited to 6.8 psi (0.47 bar), despite the lowered compression of the turbo engine (7.4:1 with dished, cast aluminum pistons). Additional changes over the naturally aspirated engine included a higher volume oil pump, an oil cooler on automatic models, and Nissan's Electronic Concentrated Control System (ECCS).

At the time of its release into the US market, the 280ZX turbo was the fastest Japanese import on the American market. The turbocharged 280ZX with a three-speed automatic delivered 0–60 mph (0–97 km/h) times of 7.4 seconds<sup>[8]</sup> and a very respectable quarter mile time of 16.6 seconds, at a top speed of 130 mph (210 km/h).

One criticism of the early 280ZX was a reduction in spring rates, giving a softer ride and making the car rather difficult to drive hard through corners without transient oversteer, which was a feature of trailing-arm rear suspensions. The release of the turbocharged model in 1981 saw the introduction of a revised rear suspension, which Nissan continued to use in the 1982 and 1983 turbos, as well as the non-turbo from mid-1982 onward. [Car and Driver](#) had another complaint of the 280ZX turbo: in a 1981 comparison of several performance cars, they decided that while the