

NISSAN FIGARO SECURITY

Theft of Figaros and Figaro parts and accessories has been on the increase and it may be appropriate to review security precautions on your vehicle.

Firstly, it's amazingly easy to get into a Figaro essentially because it has frameless windows and it's a convertible. Once inside – a thief can either steal items or drive away with very little effort and within a short period of time. Unfortunately Japanese home market cars of this era have feeble security systems – essentially because there's very little car crime in Japan.

Figaro car crime is lucrative! A stolen Figaro can be worth almost double its used car value if sold off in parts! Even easy-to-steal items can net the thief a small fortune – new cost of parts commonly stolen is given in brackets below:

Upgraded CD unit (up to **£600**)
Radiator grille (**£300**)
Set of hub caps & trims (**£200**)
Drivers side window switch (**£150**)

What can you do?

The best way of minimising the chance of a thief stealing your Figaro or its contents is to fit an alarm system. It doesn't guarantee that your Figaro won't be targeted, but in general, thieves are more likely to move on to a vehicle that's not alarmed. There's nothing very difficult about fitting an alarm system to a Figaro and there are many modestly priced systems on the market. We would however always recommend fitting an alarm which is Thatcham 1 approved (Thatcham is the UK insurance industry approval body). One benefit of a Thatcham approved alarm is that many insurance companies will offer a premium reduction for cars fitted with such alarms. Essentially an alarm system should offer basic functions – other features are discussed later.

- The alarm is armed from outside the vehicle using a remote fob. If fitted – the same fob operates the remote central locking system.
- The doors, boot lids and bonnet are fitted with devices that sound a klaxon if opened with the alarm armed.
- An internal detector sounds the klaxon if someone gets into the car with the alarm armed.
- Activating the alarm will also activate an engine immobiliser. This either makes it very difficult to start the engine or in some cases – stop the engine after a brief period.
- If the alarm is triggered, it should automatically reset to provide ongoing protection.

There are several manufacturers of Thatcham approved alarms – there’s no good and bad systems – they all tend to be to a standard. Clifford, Toad and Cobra are just three good brands you’ll find widely available. Note however that the Thatcham approval is only valid if the alarm is fitted by an approved company. A certificate will be issued for the installation – keep this safe and not in the car – your insurance company may want sight of it in the event of a claim.

Fitting alarms is generic – there’s nothing Figaro specific about the job. Check out at least a couple of local car security companies – they generally appear in Yellow Pages under Car Security or Car Alarms.

A Thatcham 1 approved alarm system will cost of the order of £300 fitted. There are numerous “cheap” alarms available in the £30 - £60 (+ fitting) price range. However such systems may not be a good choice – you should consider:

- They may be no match for a professional thief
- They may be troublesome – nuisance alarms can be a big issue
- They may not be robust. In particular cheap central locking systems can be very troublesome.
- Technical backup may be poor
- Spare parts availability may be poor e.g. replacement for a lost fob.
- There may be no interface to link to an existing or future central locking system

If you are on a budget - there are good basic alarm systems available from top manufacturers such as Cobra for around £90 for DIY fitting or around £180 professionally fitted. They come with full instructions and are reasonably straightforward to fit by a competent DIY person. If you wanted central locking – this would be an additional cost and would operate from the same remote fob as the alarm system.

We've already discussed the basic features of an alarm system. We list below some of the more common features on various alarm models – there are many more! Some of these features may be a desirable option for you – others may be a pain! The feature may be selectable – in other cases the feature cannot be bypassed – carefully consider the features of a particular system before getting it fitted.

- Valet mode. You can select the option of someone else to drive your car (e.g. a garage) without having possession of the alarm remote device.
- Anti car-jack. System locks the doors when they're closed and a few seconds after starting the engine. If you're careless (e.g. shutting the garage door with the engine still running) – *you can be locked out of the car with the engine running!!*
- Anti tilt sensor. Sounds the alarm if the car is jacked up to steal the wheels or lifted to transport or tow.
- Dual zone protection. Usually a voice warning if someone gets close to the car.
- Personal / panic alarm. The alarm can be activated by a single button push.
- Automatic window closing. Windows automatically close when alarm is armed. *We would not recommend connecting this function on a Figaro.*
- Microwave internal detector. *Essential for a convertible if you park with the top down.* The normal ultrasonic sensor to detect entry won't work with the roof down. The ultrasonic sensor normally supplied with an alarm package can be substituted for an optional microwave detector.
- Turbo timer. A few upmarket alarm systems have a built in turbo timer which allows the engine to run for a period after removing the ignition key in order to protect the turbo unit. *A very worthwhile feature for the Figaro.*
- Central locking. Most alarm systems can be supplied with remote central locking operated from the same fob as the alarm.

The next step down from an alarm system is an immobiliser. This will minimise the possibility of the car being driven away, *but will do nothing to prevent theft of vehicle parts or contents. It will also not prevent your car being towed away or loaded on to a transporter.* Since alarm systems have an immobiliser built-in – it's false economy to fit an immobiliser if you're considering fitting an alarm in the future. As with cheap alarms - cheap immobilisers may not provide a good level of security. A good immobiliser will have what's known as a dual circuit – it will isolate two different vital systems which would give a thief some considerable difficulty in defeating. As with alarms – consider an immobiliser that's Thatcham approved (Thatcham 2 approval for immobilisers). Again – to validate the Thatcham approval – the immobiliser needs to be fitted by an approved installer. A certificate will be issued.

OUR CHOICE

We don't sell or install car security systems so here's our impartial choice of security systems.

Top of range Thatcham 1 alarm system

Clifford concept 650 G5.

Budget on £300 professionally fitted – central locking would be additional

(this alarm system has a built in turbo timer)

Basic alarm system

Cobra G193

Budget on £90 for DIY fitting or £170 fully fitted – central locking would be additional

Immobiliser system

Cobra A8510

Budget on £40 for DIY fitting or £95 fully fitted.

(this is a Thatcham 2 approved dual circuit system)

OTHER SECURITY MEASURES

CD Units

Original CD units in Figaros are particularly vulnerable. There's a sizeable demand for units and in particular, those that have been reconditioned or upgraded by Clarion. It takes literally a few seconds for a thief to remove a Figaro CD unit using an electric screwdriver!!

We recommend replacing the 4 cradle mounting screws with tamperproof screws. Without the special key – the screws are very difficult to remove. Tamperproof screws come in various designs and are used extensively on electrical equipment, public transport and street furniture. Don't use one way tamperproof screws – they're not

designed to be removed and you may need to remove your CD unit at some point!

Make a note of the serial number of your CD unit and in the case of a theft – inform Clarion-Services and publish the serial number on Figaro owner forums

Radiator grilles

A new radiator grille is around £300 – they're sought after because they're vulnerable to accident damage and often lose the plastichrome coating. They simply pull out with your fingers!!

We recommend replacing 3 or 4 of the plastic clips with U-nuts and screws (you could use tamperproof self-tapping screws). The grille is still removable but it would be fiddly for and time consuming for a thief.

Bonnet badges

Theft of bonnet badges does occur – it's not a huge problem and a new badge is around £35. They're easily removed – they're held in place by double sided adhesive tape. Usually no other damage is caused in removing the badge but don't be tempted to fix it in place with strong adhesive – you're likely to end up with more expensive damage if a thief tries to prise it off!

Wheel trims and window switches

Both are very common theft items. Window switches will be protected to some extent by an alarm system.

Consider marking the registration number of the car on the underside of trims and on switch bodies using a soldering iron. It obviously won't prevent theft but will make life a bit more difficult for the thief!

This document is copyright GJNORTHALL. It is intended for individual use only. Legal action will be taken if this document is reproduced, distributed or published without the express permission of GJNORTHALL FACTORS
gjnorthall@googlemail.com

WWW.GJNORTHALL.COM

Email: GJNORTHALL@GOOGLEMAIL.COM

