

Mitsubishi Mirage Juro 1.2 Manual Road Test

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Mitsubishi Mirage Juro 1.2 Manual – Kim Henson test-drives the latest version of Mitsubishi's 'city car'.

(Words and all photographs by Kim).

The market for compact, fuel-efficient cars, often referred to as 'city cars', is a tough one in which to compete, but Mitsubishi has gone to great lengths to provide an up-to-date, well-



equipped, economical, clean-running and practical offering within a five door hatchback package that is externally small, but spacious within.

Enter the Mirage Juro...

Built in Thailand (and extensively checked by Japanese inspectors before despatch to the UK via Mitsubishi's import centre at the Royal Portbury Dock at Bristol), the latest Mirage Juro model has been redesigned from stem to stern, incorporating (very significantly) lighter weight, improved dynamics, new front and rear styling, more standard-fit features and higher grade interiors. These efforts are all aimed at making the newcomer attractive for buyers who may also be considering rival models such as the Hyundai i10, Nissan Micra, VW up! and Toyota Aygo - all of which are seen by Mitsubishi as main opposition contenders.

The widespread use of high tensile steel has helped in reducing body shell weight, while retaining strength, and wind-tunnel assessment has aided aerodynamic performance, with air flow being improved around the front grille and bumper, also around the rear spoiler, bumper and bodywork.

The fruits of all these measures are a vehicle which Mitsubishi claim is one of the lightest, most aerodynamic and fuel-efficient five door petrol-powered hatchbacks available.

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Certainly on paper its credentials are impressive... All versions are powered by a lightweight, compact new generation 12 valve three cylinder engine, with lower friction levels than hitherto and developing 79 bhp at 6,000 rpm plus 106 Nm (78 lb.ft) of torque at 4,000 rpm.



The cars are equipped as standard with 'Auto Stop & Go' (a fuel-saving system that temporarily shuts off the engine when the vehicle is at a halt in traffic, etc.), as well as a regenerative braking system, to harness power and further improve economy and emissions performance.

In addition there's a high-efficiency alternator and an intelligent battery sensor.

The engine incorporates the 'Mitsubishi Innovative Valve timing Electronic Control system' ('MIVEC' for short), which effectively amends the cam profiles to suit different operating conditions. In this way power, fuel consumption and emissions are optimised.

Low friction 175/55R15 tyres are fitted to the new-style 15 inch aluminium alloy road



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wheels, which feature an intricate spoked design.



To help drivers achieve the best possible mpg and emissions figures, the instrument panel incorporates a three bar 'Eco Drive Assist' display.

Across the range the official Combined fuel consumption figure is 65.7 mpg and CO2 emissions are 100 g/km or less. This means that the car qualifies for zero rate road tax in the first and following years, also nil liability for the London Congestion Charge.



Although the vehicle comes as standard with a five speed manual gearbox (as on our test car), customers can optionally specify the latest incarnation of Mitsubishi's 'INVECS-III' CVT ('Constantly Variable Transmission') wide ratio transmission, which features a sub-gear train to provide improved acceleration and petrol economy. The engine speed range over which the lock-up clutch operates has been extended, and transmission control has been optimised to further improve fuel consumption without affecting the car's performance.

INSIDE STORY

Practicality has not been ignored, and the five seater, five door body shell also includes a boot that offers 175 litres (6.18 cu.ft) of space when all three rear seats are occupied. The rear seat is divided two thirds: one third, so that a variety of passenger/luggage carrying options are possible, depending on needs.

Beneath the flat boot floor is a hidden storage box.



Standard equipment levels are high for the class of vehicle, with the Juro featuring (among a wealth of other useful items; too many to list here!) such niceties as keyless entry, heated



front seats, cruise control, steering wheel mounted audio controls, electrically folding door mirrors incorporating repeater indicators, rear parking sensors, a DAB (Digital Audio Broadcasting) plus AM/FM radio plus a CD player and Bi-Xenon headlamps, and iPod/Bluetooth/USB connectivity.

The interior (with a 'Simple & Clean' theme) features new, 'soft touch' upholstery, an updated, leather-trimmed steering wheel, climate control air conditioning and revised instrumentation (with ambient temperature indication and frost warnings included). Sound-deadening improvements have also been built-in.

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Mitsubishi says that the leg room in the rear is generous for the class of vehicle, and rivals that found in many larger models.

Safety is high on the agenda too, with Mitsubishi's 'RISE' ('Reinforced Impact Safety Evolution') body design providing what is said to be a massively strong monocoque structure, manufactured from high tensile steel. The company claims that the Mirage provides the highest level of collision safety in its class, in Japan. Among the standard-fit safety aspects are six airbags, anti-lock braking with Electronic Brakeforce Distribution, Active Stability, Traction Control and Brake Assist systems, Hill Start Assist, ESS ('Emergency Stop System'), daytime running lamps, an engine immobiliser and childproof rear door locks.

DYNAMICS

MacPherson strut type coil spring front suspension is employed, together with a stabiliser bar. At the rear, a torsion beam axle is used, and again a stabiliser bar is part of the set-up. Compared with previous versions, the suspension assemblies have lost weight, contributing to improved fuel consumption.

The running gear has been updated (with amendments to the spring rates and shock



absorber damping forces) and the electrically-operated power steering calibration has been revised (to give improved accuracy and control) compared with earlier versions, so that the latest Mirage Juro will cope better with, and be more pleasant to drive in, longer-distance motoring.

REAL LIFE TEST

At the outset I was impressed by the ease with which the driver and all passengers could enter and leave the car, courtesy of the four wide-opening side doors. Once aboard, I found the seats proved to be accommodating and there was good head and leg room in the front and rear, unless the front seats were positioned towards the rear end of their travel, in which situation leg room for rear seat occupants was fairly limited. A welcome aspect was that the centre section of the rear floor was relatively low, making it easier than in some cars for a central passenger in the rear seat to 'park' their feet.



Useful storage compartments around the interior include deep, long bins in the front doors; these bins incorporate bottle holders towards their forward ends. By contrast there are no bins in the rear doors. However, there is a sizeable lidded glovebox on the passenger side of the fascia, in which is housed the comprehensive, well-written and very useful handbook for the vehicle. Above the glovebox there is a shallow shelf, bordered by low 'walls' to prevent objects therein from cascading off the shelf.

There is an additional small storage compartment plus two cup holders, all built into the centre console, plus another, single cup holder just behind the conventional handbrake lever - which personally I was also pleased to see, rather than an electronically-controlled parking



brake.

The luggage boot is not huge, but reasonable for the size of the vehicle. When the rear seats are not all required for passengers, the luggage-carrying capacity of the car can be increased by folding forwards the rear seat backrests (in a two thirds - left-hand side:one third - right-hand side arrangement), and when folded the backrest sections sit near-flat with the main part of the boot floor. I was impressed by the useful and very neat built-in storage slots (one on each side of the car) provided to accommodate the outer two seat belt buckles, when the rear seat backs are folded.

A very useful feature is the purpose-designed lift-out, compartmentalised hidden storage box that lives in a shallow space beneath the boot floor - ideal for accommodating a variety of 'things' that are best kept out of the main boot. The downside is that there is no spare wheel, just an 'emergency kit' housed in a well right at the base of the luggage compartment.

The high level of the vehicle's standard equipment was very welcome (and particularly so as many of the Mirage Juro's features not found in other cars in this class), especially the reverse parking sensors, the cruise control system, the electrically-controlled side mirrors, the four electrically-operated windows, the heated front seats and the decent quality, four speaker sound system, complete with DAB radio as well as AM/FM wavelengths. Personally I was pleased still to find a CD player as part of the audio system too. A further nice touch was the inclusion of courtesy mirrors in both sun visors.

DRIVING

I found that the naturally-aspirated three cylinder petrol engine was a willing enough unit, provided that fairly high engine revs were maintained. In fact the motor pulled smoothly from around 2,000 rpm, but, with maximum torque (pulling power) not achieved until a rather high 4,000 rpm is reached, nothing much happens in terms of acceleration until the tachometer needle passes an indicated 2,800 rpm or so. On long, steep main road hills (for example), a change down to a lower ratio or two from fifth (top) gear was sometimes



required in order to maintain momentum. Not that this is a problem, for that is what a gearbox is for, of course, and I found that in this Mitsubishi the gearchange quality was silky-smooth. The clutch operation was also light but positive, and helped make driving easy in town use, as did the compact turning circle and the ease with which the car can be manoeuvred at low speeds.

At low engine speeds the motor emits its distinctive 'three cylinder' sound, and when accelerating hard it lets you know that it is working hard in terms of being slightly more audible, but I didn't find the noise intrusive nor harsh, at any speed.

In urban running the fuel and emissions-saving 'Auto Stop & Go' system worked well, stopping the engine when the car came to a halt at traffic lights (etc.) but with a light touch on the clutch pedal instantly and quietly bringing the motor back to life.

As with many of today's so-called 'city cars', there is no reason why a Mirage Juro cannot be used on long distance journeys as well as in more local use, and during my week with the test car I undertook, and enjoyed, several long trips.

I discovered that once the engine speed had been 'wound up' (as previously mentioned) to relatively high rpm readings, the car cruised beautifully and quietly at high road speeds. In the test car, 60 mph in fifth (top) gear required a rev counter reading of 2,700 rpm, and at 70 mph the tacho needle was nudging 3,200 rpm.

The well-damped ride quality was good, the handling/roadholding qualities impressive for a compact vehicle, and the braking was confidence-inspiring. The electric-power-assisted steering was effective too, especially in tight urban manoeuvres, although I did feel that it was a little over-sensitive for my taste, at higher road speeds.

During my time with the Mitsubishi I was obliged to carry out a fair bit of driving at night, and I found the headlamps to be 'just right' at all speeds, giving good illumination on both dipped and main beam settings, and without the sharp contrast between the two that is evident on many cars.



Praise too is due for the efficient quadruple-jet screenwashers; a real boon on country district roads left muddy after frequent rain showers.

Fuel consumption proved to be commendable, with the on-board computer indicating an average of 51.9 mpg as the worst figure obtained during mixed running, this improving to over 56.7 mpg on a long country run. These are some way short of the car's official 'Combined' figure of 65.7 mpg, but impressive nonetheless. In addition to a useful and unmistakable 'ECO' lamp set-up, an illuminated indicator showing advised gearchange points is also incorporated into the dash's information display, both systems helping to minimise petrol consumption.

VERDICT

The Mirage Juro is a likeable, very high specification compact car, which feels well-built, provides practical transport for up to five adults to travel in reasonable comfort, performs well and is economical to run.

From my point of view... I feel that if the engine developed its maximum torque output a little lower down in the engine rev range, this would make the car even more impressive and enjoyable to drive.



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WHEELS-ALIVE TECH. SPEC IN BRIEF:

Mitsubishi Mirage Juro 1.2 Manual.

(Five seater/five door hatchback).

Engine: Twin overhead camshaft, three cylinder, 12 valve MIVEC petrol. (Euro 6b emissions-compliant)

Transmission: Five speed manual gearbox (constantly variable automatic transmission optionally available); front wheel drive.



Power: 79 bhp @ 6,000 rpm.

Torque: 106 Nm (78 lb.ft) @ 4,000 rpm.

Performance:

0-62 mph: 11.7 seconds (12.8 with CVT auto transmission).

Top speed: 112 mph (107 mph with CVT auto transmission).

Fuel consumption ('Official' figures): Urban, 55.4 mpg (CVT auto, 57.6 mpg); Combined, 65.7 mpg (CVT auto, 65.7 mpg). (On test, on several separate trips in varying traffic conditions, average figures of between 51.9 and 56.7 mpg).

Fuel tank capacity: 7.69 gallons (35 litres). Theoretical range at 'Combined' mpg figure, over 500 miles. Range on a tank-full at our actual achieved MPG figures, between 400 and 435 miles approximately.

Emissions and taxation: CO2 100 g/km (CVT auto, 99 g/km). VED Band Light A, zero rate per annum.

Warranty: Five years/62,500 miles, plus 12 years against corrosion perforation, also three years pan-European roadside assistance, including home start.

Service intervals: Annually/12,500 miles.

Dimensions:

Length 3,795 mm (12.45 ft), Width 1665mm (5.46 ft), Height 1,505 mm (4.94 ft). Ground clearance (unladen) 150mm (5.91 in).

Turning circle (electrically-operated power-assisted steering): 9.2 m (30.2 ft).



Boot capacity (minimum): 175 litres (6.18 cu.ft).

Important Weights:

Kerb weight: Manual version, 845 kg (1,863 lb). CVT auto version, 865 kg (1,907 lb).

Braked towing capacity: 200 kg (441 lb).

Price ('On the Road'): Manual version, £12,499. CVT auto version (with leather upholstery), £13,499.