Mitsubishi L200 (Series 5) Club Cab 4Life Pick-up Road Test

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Author: Kim Henson

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Tough On (and Off) the Streets…

Kim Henson assesses the Club Cab 4 Life version of Mitsubishi’s

Series 5 L200 Pick-up.

(All words and photos by Kim).

The first time I drove a Mitsubishi was in 1984, when road-testing that vehicle as part of the team on the wonderful and much-lamented 'Practical Motorist' magazine.

The then-current, first generation short wheelbase Shogun was the subject of the test. That tough, compact 4×4 acquitted itself well both on and off road, in a pretty severe assessment regime that all four wheel drive models tested by the magazine were put through. That included normal road use, plus off-road driving on a military range more suited to tanks and tracked armoured cars than to everyday vehicles, and I also remember the Shogun being used by me to tow a large trailer full of bricks along muddy forest tracks for many miles. In all these roles, the vehicle performed admirably.

Our verdict on that Mitsubishi – 'Excellent'.

By coincidence, and by chance, in the south of France that same year I met a man who spent his working life towing very large mobile homes from the UK to the French Mediterranean coast and back again. He told me that he used a Shogun that had already tirelessly clocked up many thousands of miles, also that it was still going strong and driving perfectly – and he rated it as comfortable too. His verdict – 'First class; cannot fault it'.

Under the bonnet of the Shogun we tested in those days was a state-of-the-art four cylinder turbo diesel engine that pulled strongly and was economical to operate.

Fast-forward 32 years, and although the vehicle I am covering in this road test is an L200 Pick-up (rather than today's Shogun), under its bonnet, like that early Shogun, is a highly effective four cylinder turbo diesel engine with the potential to perform well. Of course, progress has been made in many areas over the last three decades or so, but Mitsubishi's reputation for building four wheel drive vehicles that are tough, effective, practical and truly economical overall to operate, has justifiably been maintained throughout.



‘Our’ L200 Club Cab 4Life

The latest (Series 5) L200 pick-up has already won many awards for its overall competence. In producing this vehicle, Mitsubishi has drawn on experience gained in building a total of over 4.1 million pick-ups during six decades.

This firm knows what it’s about in this area, and although, of course, the latest L200 incorporates the DNA and core strengths of its predecessors, it is said that the latest model is completely new from the ground up, having been improved significantly in over 330 aspects!

In all this the aim has been to produce SUV-like quality, refinement and dynamic performance, while retaining the inherent strength and dependability for which the model is renowned.

Importantly, since these pick-ups are used in all types of ground conditions, Mitsubishi says that the L200 is the only pick-up that can be driven permanently in two wheel drive and four wheel drive both on and off road.

In fact the four wheel drive system is simplicity itself to use, with a rotary control on the central console allowing the driver to select two wheel drive (for normal road use), high ratio four wheel drive or, for when ground conditions are especially challenging/difficult, low ratio four wheel drive. In addition there's a dash-mounted switch to engage the rear differential lock, bringing this into play if one wheel on the axle is spinning and needs help…

The two latest additions to the L200 range for this year are the Single Cab 4Life (a conventional two seater pick-up truck with a huge load bay) and the Club Cab 4Life. This version is the subject of our road test, and by contrast with the Single Cab version, it features a compact four seater cabin (the rear seats incorporate 'flip-up' seat bases for when they are not in use) and a load bed that is just slightly shorter than that of its single cab stablemate. The additional cost for the Club Cab model (excluding VAT) is £1,000, making its Commercial Vehicle List price £18,499 excluding VAT, or £22,998.80 including VAT.

For many situations, the advantage of the Club Cab model is that it enables four people to be accommodated within the cabin in reasonable comfort, when the need arises. Okay, the rear seats are more in the spirit of 'occasional' seats, at least for adults (with upright, fairly thinly padded backrests, and leg room that is necessarily limited with the front seats set towards their rearmost positions), but there are four doors (more of which later) and the vehicle is entirely practical for a variety of uses.

Both versions are powered by Mitsubishi's 2.4 litre engine in Euro 6B emissions regulations

compliant form and developing 151 bhp plus a maximum of 380 Nm (280 lb.ft) of torque – available from just 1,500 rpm. This drives the rear wheels via a six speed manual gearbox.

Auto Stop and Go (AS&G) technology is set up to save fuel by cutting the engine when the vehicle comes to rest in traffic. Further useful technical aspects, incorporated to help the driver include Active Stability and Traction Control (M-ASTC), Hill Start Assist (HAS) and Trailer Stability Assist (TSA).

Importantly for many buyers, these vehicles, which are built for 'heavy duty', all have exceedingly strong, long-travel suspension (leaf-sprung at the rear) and have a 'braked' trailer/caravan towing capacity of 3,000 kg (6,614 lb).

In both cases the car-like cabs incorporate refinements that include a 2-DIN stereo radio/CD player with twin speakers and USB connectivity, Bluetooth with music streaming, additional audio controls on the steering wheel, remote central door locking, electrically-operated door windows, and a front storage box with a centrally-positioned arm rest.

A trip computer also comes as standard, providing those oh-so-useful readouts for aspects such as average fuel consumption, mileage range remaining on fuel in the tank, and so on.

The Single Cab 4Life variant has 16 inch steel wheels (AND a full-size spare), plus a colour-coded ladder rack and side lashing hooks.

By contrast the Club Cab 4Life version (as tested) does not have the ladder rack and lashing hooks but DOES feature: Rear-hinged rear doors to aid entry to and exit from the cabin's two rear seats, 16 inch aluminium alloy wheels (and a full size spare), a leather-trimmed steering wheel and gear lever knob, silver-finished side steps, two more speakers for the stereo system, and height-adjustment for the driver's seat.

For both variants there's a choice of five paint colours. There is also a wide range of optional equipment, including protective shields for the load bed (a must, I'd say) and rear 'truck' tops to cover the load area.

Things that the Club Cab 4Life DOESN'T have as standard include… rear parking sensors or a rear view camera – again, I feel essential in this type of vehicle where rearward visibility is compromised (especially when loaded). In addition, the door mirrors have to be manually-adjusted, but to be honest I didn't find this a problem.



Living With It…

In unladen mode, the L200 sits quite high off the ground so climbing aboard requires a little agility, although our Club Cab version does provide handy side steps to aid the climbing process, and there is a helpful grab handle mounted on each front screen pillar.

Once on board, the cab is comfortable and spacious for front seat occupants. Passengers in

the rear two ‘occasional’ seats gain access via two ingenious, short rear doors. These are cleverly and unobtrusively hinged at their rear edges, and swing open to provide easy access to the rear seats as there is no central side pillar to get in the way. On each side of the vehicle the front door always has to be opened first, then the rear door can be released by means of an interior handle. I thought that the pillarless design was an attractive and useful feature.

The rear seats are quite capable of accommodating two adults, although the starkly upright and thinly-upholstered backrests might become more noticeable over long distances. It should also be mentioned that with the front seats set towards the rearward extent of their travels, leg room for those in the rear isn’t great. However, these seats are intended for ‘occasional’ use and in that role are perfectly adequate.

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All the controls are easy to operate and logically laid-out, and the straightforward rotary control for the four wheel drive system (as already mentioned) proved to be intuitive in action. During my time with the vehicle I didn’t test it off-road, but encountered a moment of concern during my photo session… I had reversed the vehicle down to the water’s edge on a gravel surface at a countryside river crossing ford, and happily spent half an hour or so taking photographs of the vehicle. When the time came to drive away, the rear wheels started to spin with the transmission in its normal ‘on road’ two wheel drive mode. Even when four wheel drive ‘high’ ratio was engaged, the wheels failed to gain traction, but a quick switch to four wheel drive ‘low’ ratio had the L200 eagerly clambering up the slippery slope to solid ground! Phew.

The torquey 2.4 litre four cylinder turbo diesel engine is a gem, providing plenty of low speed pulling power (especially handy for carrying heavy loads and when towing) and good acceleration. The vehicle was happy to romp up all the hills we encountered hills with ease (and with plenty in reserve), and cruised quietly at motorway speeds.



The engine pulled strongly from around 1,500 rpm (the lowest speed at which maximum torque is developed with this unit), and 70 mph in top (sixth) gear required a whisker under 2,000 rpm (maximum torque is developed right up to 2,500 rpm…).

The six speed manual gearbox has a slick-acting gearchange and ratio changes were easily accomplished.

Of course this vehicle is designed to cope with heavy loads, whether carried on the large load bed or in a trailer, so when unladen it was not surprising to me that the ride quality tended to be rather ‘bouncy’ over rough sections of tarmac. This was especially noticeable, even at necessarily low speeds, over one very long section of roadworks in Somerset, with a broken surface and raised ridges. As we discovered, this can also result in fairly violent

contact between the front passenger's right elbow and the top of the unyieldingly hard lid of the central storage box; we felt that it was a shame that this surface was not cushioned.

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In unladen mode, the vehicle deliberately sits high off the ground, and whether loaded or not, the long-travel suspension can cope easily with rough terrain and comprehensive 'articulation' of the front and rear axles (allowing all wheels to remain on the ground, even when they are sitting at vastly different heights!).

Although, during my time with the vehicle, I didn't have the need to carry heavy loads, from past experience I do know how effective the L200 has always been in this role. I would also fully expect the ride quality of the latest version to improve substantially when the vehicle is laden.

The tailgate is easy to open and close, and appears to be solidly-constructed, as with the rest of the vehicle.

The load bed (with lashing hooks on each side) sits above a beefy underbody structure which is evidently built to take the rough with the smooth.

The substantial rear leaf springs are capable of handling heavy on-board loads when required (for taxation purposes, up to 1,045 kg or 2,303 lb) and the vehicle has the towing capacity to deal with a braked trailer weighing up to 3,000 kg or 6,614 lb.

During my time with the vehicle it was used in a variety of situations, from in-town use to country cruising to long-distance motorway work. It acquitted itself well in all.

Care needs to be taken on wet roads with the vehicle unladen (and hence with minimal weight over the rear wheels, so traction is compromised when in two wheel drive mode); wheelspin/sliding can be induced if accelerating hard…

Overall I found that the L200's handling was impressive for a large vehicle with high ground clearance.

For driving in town and when parking, the L200 proved to be easy to manoeuvre and I appreciated its impressively small turning circle, but the large physical size of the vehicle can make itself felt, and needs to be thought about. Many marked parking spaces in urban car parks and motorway service stations are not large enough to fully accommodate the L200 and potential 'overhang' needs to be considered!

Of course the L200 does not have a luggage boot. However, within the cab there are deep bins (incorporating bottle/flask holders) in each of the four doors, plus a lockable, lidded glove box (which houses the commendably comprehensive and helpful handbook). In addition there are two small under-floor compartments, one on each side beneath the rear seats, and covered by lift-up flaps. These house the jack and wheelbrace, but will also take additional items. There's also the storage box already referred to, between the front seats, which incorporates a separate tray within the box, and features a hinged lid that doubles as an arm rest.

I particularly liked the mellow tone of the four speaker stereo system; the excellent sound quality was far better than in some modern vehicles that I have encountered. This is especially important to me as I always love listening to music on long drives…

During my time with the Mitsubishi the vehicle recorded an overall fuel consumption, in mixed use, of 32.6 mpg. While this is some way short of the 'Official Combined' figure of 40.9 mpg, I felt it was a reasonable figure, not least because the vehicle had only covered just over 200 miles at the start of my test. I would expect consumption to improve as the new mechanical components bed in further. In any event, even at 32.6 mpg the 15.5 gallon fuel tank should provide a range of well over 500 miles between refuelling stops, for normal road use.

VERDICT

Mitsubishi's L200 models have always been built to cope with tough work, and after a happy week with this Series 5 version, all the indications point to this latest model being equally good in this respect, or better still.

The Club Cab 4 Life variant is a practical vehicle for load-carrying and occasionally taking four people when required. It's easy to drive and reassuringly competent for when the going gets rough.

So, to sum up… Solid, well-built, dependable and practical.



WHEELS-ALIVE TECH. SPEC IN BRIEF:

Mitsubishi L200 (Series 5) Club Cab 4Life Pick-up.

(Cab seating capacity, four – ‘two plus two’).

Engine: Twin overhead camshaft, four cylinder, 2442cc, common rail turbocharged diesel (with intercooler). Euro 6b emissions regulations compliant.

Transmission: Six speed manual gearbox; rear wheel drive.

Power: 151 bhp @ 3,500 rpm.

Torque: 380 Nm (280 lb.ft) @ 1,500 to 2,500 rpm.

Performance:

0-62 mph: 12.2 seconds.

Top speed: 105 mph.

Fuel consumption (‘Official’ figures): Urban, 34.4 mpg; Combined, 40.9 mpg. (On test, over 300 miles of mixed motoring, average 32.6 mpg).

Fuel tank capacity: 15.5 gallons (75 litres). Theoretical range at ‘Combined’ mpg figure, over 630 miles. Range at our actual achieved MPG figure, over 500 miles.

Emissions and taxation: CO2 180 g/km. VED Band Light Goods Vehicles (LGV), £230 per annum.

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

Service intervals: Annually/12,500 miles.

Dimensions: Length 5,195mm (17.04 ft), Width 1,785mm (5.86 ft), Height 1,775 mm (5.82 ft). Ground clearance (unladen) 200mm (0.66 ft).

Important Weights:

Kerb weight 1,805 kg (3,979 lb).

Max. payload capacity (for tax purposes) 1,045 kg (2,303 lb).

Braked towing capacity: 3,000 kg (6,614 lb).

Load compartment:

Load bed dimensions: Length 1,850mm (6.07 ft), Width 1470mm (4.82 ft), Height 475mm (1.56 ft).

Cargo floor height: 845mm (2.77 ft).

Price ('On the Road'): Commercial Vehicle List price, excluding VAT, £18,499.00 (Including VAT @ 20%, £22, 198.80).

Note: We have also covered the Double Cab version of the Series 5 L200; to read David Miles' assessment of this variant (published earlier in 2016), please click HERE or see below…

Mitsubishi Motors new L200 Pick-up – still a legend in its own lifetime