Mitsubishi Outlander Diesel seven seater SUV – Road Test

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David Miles (Miles Better News Agency) test drives the seven seater Mitsubishi Outlander 2.2 DI-D automatic...

Mitsubishi Motors celebrated their 100th anniversary of car production in 2017, having produced their first car – the Model A – in 1917 and their first 4WD model – the PX33 – in 1933. Imports first began to Europe, in fact the UK, in 1974 with the Lancer and Galant saloons, with their first Shogun 4WD range arriving in 1983.

Today Mitsubishi Motors is part of the Renault-Nissan Alliance which should go some way to

the range strengthening the different types of models they can offer customers. Currently virtually all Mitsubishi's sold in Europe and elsewhere are 4x4s and SUVs and include Shogun, Outlander, ASX and L200 Double Cabs. The glory days of Lancer Evolution road based rally cars are long gone, as are models such as the Starion and 3000GT sports cars as well as more conventional model ranges such as the Galant, Sigma, Lonsdale, Space Wagon, Space Runner, Space Star and so on.

Shortly their range will be expanded again with the arrival of the Eclipse Cross and Shogun Sport but again these are SUVs.

Core to the current Mitsubishi range is the Outlander line-up of two distinct model ranges, the Outlander PHEV a petrol-electric plug-in hybrid with five seats and 4WD, but only modest off-road abilities. Also there are the Outlander 2.2 DI-D turbodiesels with manual and automatic transmission options, 4WD as standard and seven seats for all but the base level grade 2 version which has five seats. Whilst the PHEV models are the highest selling models because of their low 42 g/km emissions (which means they are popular with company cars users because they incur low Benefit-in-Kind company car tax charges), the DI-D diesel models with CO2 outputs ranging from 139 to 154 g/km are more practically suited to high mileage drivers or those that want a hard-core on-off road 4WD workhorse and capable of towing heavy loads when required.

Faced with the arrival of more and more 4x4s/SUVs/Crossover types of new vehicles due to public demand driven by their off-road styling and perceived kerb appeal status, it is easy to overlook what 4x4s are already available and well able to cater for a wide variety of uses. The Outlander DI-D diesel is one such model range.

The Outlander 2018 turbodiesel model year prices start from £25,255 on-the-road and go up to £31,605 depending on the level of specification. All are 2.2-litre DI-D turbodiesel, with manual or auto gearbox options, all are 4WD and all but the base model have seven seats. For good measure there is also the option of a commercial vehicle version with two seats, priced from £27,169 including Vat. The Outlander PHEV petrol/electric plug-in hybrid models are priced from £34,805 to £46,605. Good news just received, Mitsubishi is offering £5k off the price of an Outlander diesel model with their Scrappage Scheme and £4k off the Outlander PHEV. The offers runs until 27 March 2018 and are available for any trade-in

make or model registered before January 2010.

I've just had a get-to-know-you-again spell in the 2.2 DI-D automatic with level 4 specification, priced at £34,055. The other spec levels are 2 and 3, and at the top of the range the special edition Keiko versions, again with manual or auto transmission options.

The most recent changes to the Outlander were the front end design – which gave it a sleek swept-back grille flanked by LED headlights with an imposing front bumper, living up to its 4WD image – and the 18-inch alloy wheels which just add to its status as a proper SUV. However more importantly the last raft of changes were made to improve the ride and handling via the MacPherson strut front elements and rear multi-link suspension system. The front suspension cross-member was reinforced, front shock absorbers retuned, rear suspension spring rates and damper settings changed and larger rear shock absorbers used. In the ride and handling departments these are the most noticeable features of the latest models. The ride is now very compliant, the handling taut given its high ground clearance, and the steering provides better feel with a more confident ability for dealing with higher cornering speeds. Of course given its height there is still some body roll during cornering but generally the vehicle rides flat and level and the absorption of impacts from potholes is much improved. First class marks for better handling and ride quality refinement.

The improved refinement is also carried through into the interior with the use of noise absorption acoustic glass for the windscreen, also thicker glass is used elsewhere and the soundproofing has been increased throughout the vehicle.

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When it comes to core specification the Outlander Commercial and Outlander 2 versions have an auto-dimming rear-view mirror, dual-zone climate control, LED daytime running lights, auto lights, cruise control, ECO mode, parking sensors, city crash provision, electrically operated door mirrors and trip computer and full underbody off-road protection. For level 2 passenger versions, front and rear electrically operated windows and door

mirrors are standard. New to the Outlander 3 are an Electronic Parking Brake and Brake Auto Hold (automatic version only), sat-nav, front fog lights, rain sensing wipers, power folding door mirrors, hands-free Bluetooth, and seven seats. With the Outlander 4, there is the addition of a heated steering wheel, LED front fog lamps, Blind Spot Warning and Rear Cross Traffic Alert, Electronic Parking Brake and Brake Auto Hold (automatic only), leather upholstery, heated front seats, a 360˚ camera with steering wheel switch, an electrically operated rear tailgate, keyless entry with push-button start and DAB radio.

Most versions of the Outlander have seven seats fitted in three rows. The middle row is 60/40 split and can be slid forward to give easier access to the rear row of 50/50 split seats which fold out of the floor. These are lightweight units and best used for occasional trips.

With the second and third rows of seats folded there is a load length of 1.71 metres (5.61 ft), very practical for carrying long items. The minimum boot space with all seven seats raised is a modest 128 litres (4.52 cu.ft) but with the second and third row of seats folded down this goes up to an impressive 1,608 litres (56.79 cu.ft). The braked towing capacity for my test drive automatic model is 2,000 kg (4,409 lb).

Apart from its people or load carrying abilities the Outlander is not just another lightweight SUV, it’s a proper 4WD SUV and suitable for family or workhorse use and there are not too many of these types of models still available as manufacturers have chosen to provide what we call soft-off roaders, more car-like with all wheel drive almost a secondary consideration.

At the heart of the diesel Outlander is a 2.2 litre, four cylinder, direct injection turbodiesel DOHC aluminium unit producing 150hp. When it comes to that all important torque output manual gearbox versions have 380 Nm (280 lb.ft) from 1,750rpm but for the automatic versions the torque is slightly lower at 360 Nm (266 lb.ft) but it's available from 1,500 rpm. This lower level apparently is better suited to the gear ratios of the six-speed torque converter gearbox, especially for off-road driving, with the first four ratios geared lower than the manual box and fifth and sixth gears having higher ratios for more relaxed high speed on-road cruising.

The drivetrain is an on-demand 4WD system with its 4WD ECO mode removing the need for a traditional 2WD function. The system in this mode only engages the rear wheels when the system's ECU determines extra grip is needed. A simple rotary controller allows for the selection of 4WD ECO for maximum fuel economy, 4WD Auto will engage the rear wheels

more often than its 4WD ECO mode during more hazardous road conditions and 4WD Lock mode provides maximum traction for the worst of driving conditions, mud, snow, ice and of course off-road travel.

The 2.2 DI-D automatic version I tested has a modest top speed 118 mph, that's 6 mph slower than the manual version and a zero to 62 mph acceleration time of 11.6 seconds against the 10.2 seconds of the manual version. Officially the Combined Cycle figure for the auto is 48.7 mpg and my week of on-road test driving returned a figure of 40.2 mpg. The manual gearbox model has an official figure of 53.3 mpg. When it comes to the CO2 figures the auto has a high 154 g/km output meaning that VED road tax is a costly £500 First Year rate and then £140 Standard Rate and company car Benefit-in-Kind tax is 32%. By comparison the manual gearbox model has a CO2 figure of 139 g/km so VED is £200 and then £140 and BiK tax is 29%. So not only is the manual Outlander cheaper to buy, it's faster and much less costly to run but not as rewarding to drive in terms of ease and refinement.

VERDICT

It is the case that the PHEV plug-in petrol electric hybrid version of the Outlander is the main selling model because of its low running and tax costs, but it's the diesel model that is best suited for high mileage users. It provides better handling, it's more agile and much more capable as a proper 4WD vehicle. It is one of a diminishing breed of such vehicles as even the latest generation of large SUVs have gone 'soft' chasing fashion-conscious buyers who don't go anywhere near driving off-road but like the status of owning a big SUV.

For: £5k Scrappage Scheme offer (for those who would use this), versatile seating and load carrying combinations, strong engine, capable on/off road performance, much improved ride comfort and sharper handling, lots of safety features and high level of specification, good kerb appeal.

Against: Automatic versions have much higher running costs and levels of tax over a manual gearbox model due to high CO2 emissions, overshadowed in terms of sales by its PHEV low

CO2 low tax but more expensive to buy Outlander models.

Milestones and Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

Mitsubishi Outlander 4, 2.2 DI-D automatic, 7-seat SUV.

Price: £34,055 (less £5k Scrappage Scheme offer).

Engine/transmission: 2.2 litre, four cylinder, DI-D direct injection turbodiesel, 150 hp,

360 Nm (266 lb.ft) from 1,500rpm, six speed auto with manual mode, multi-mode 4WD on-demand system.

Performance: 118 mph, 0–62 mph 11.6 seconds.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 48.7 mpg (40.2 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 154 g/km, VED road tax £500/£140, BiK company car tax 32%.

Insurance Group: 27E.

Warranty: Five years/62,500 miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,695 mm (15.40 ft), W 1,810 mm (5.94 ft), H 1,710 mm (5.61 ft), boot/load space 128 to 1,608 litres (4.52 to 56.79 cu.ft), braked towing weight 2,000 kg (4,409 lb), five doors/seven seats.