New 2017 Mitsubishi Outlander models – First Impressions

Published: January 19, 2017

Author: David Miles

Online version: https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/new-2017-mitsubishi-outlander-models-first-impressions/



2017 Model Year revised Mitsubishi Outlander SUV is test driven.

By David Miles (Miles Better News Agency)

2017 is a notable year for Mitsubishi Motors as it is their centenary year of passenger car production, although the Mitsubishi name, meaning 'three Diamonds', first appeared in 1870 as a mining, steel production and ship building business. Their first production passenger car – the Model A – first hit the roads in Japan in 1917. Their engineering prowess continued with other notable firsts such as Japan's first diesel car engine in 1931 and their first 4×4 car – the PX33 – launched aptly in 1933.

The brand arrived in the UK and Europe in 1974 at the London Motor Show with Lancer and Galant models, followed by the famous Shogun SUVs in 1983. World Rally, UK Rally and Dakar rally successes followed with Lancer, Galant VR4, Lancer Evolution and Shogun models.



Stars of today's Mitsubishi passenger car range are their Outlander large five and seven seater SUVs, first launched in 2001 and replaced and updated on a regular basis since then. The most significant introduction was in 2014 when the Outlander PHEV (Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicle) models were added to the range.

The 2014 Outlander was designed from the outset to incorporate both internal combustion engines and plug-in hybrid technology with 4×4 drive. The Outlander PHEV uses a 2.0 litre four cylinder petrol engine and two electric motors, one at the front in harness with the

petrol engine, and one at the rear independently driving the rear wheels and giving it the 4WD facility.

The latest 2017 PHEV model year updates see handling and ride improvements to the chassis and changes to the powertrain which results in an electric power only driving range of 33 miles, improved fuel economy of officially 166 mpg, improved CO2 emissions of 41 g/km and an improved rapid charge rate of 25 minutes for an 80% battery charge. A full charge from a domestic 13-amp electricity supply takes five hours. Other 2017 model year improvements include Mitsubishi's new Dynamic Shield front end design, auto hold for the electronic parking brake, an EV hold function which maintains electric power only driving for use in zero emission zones, the addition of LED front fog lights, automatic high beam headlights, forward collision mitigation with pedestrian protection and blind spot warning.

The Outlander PHEV in the UK and Europe, which started the whole automotive industry's PHEV segment, recorded 10,000 sales in just 10 months after its introduction. Since then over 26,600 of them have been sold in the UK. Despite other PHEVs from an increasing number of manufacturers entering the market the Outlander PHEV still is the best selling model, accounting for 34% of all UK PHEV sales.



At the media launch of the latest 2017 upgraded Outlander models, Lance Bradley, managing director of Mitsubishi Motors in the UK said, “The success of the Outlander PHEV is not just the demand from fleet and company car users due to the very low Benefit-in-Kind tax costs. The current sales split is 50/50 between fleet and retail buyers, and even after the Government’s Plug-in Vehicle Grant was reduced the demand has remained roughly the same.

He added, “Not only is the Outlander the best selling PHEV in the UK, but it is the best selling electric powered car of any kind, it has the longest pure electric driving range and the lowest CO2 emissions of any 4WD/AWD vehicle.”

Mitsubishi in the UK sold around 12,000 Outlander models in the UK, last year making it their best selling model range. Out of that total 9,500, or 79%, were PHEV five seater versions and the remainder were 2.2-litre turbodiesel seven seater versions which accounted for 21% of total sales – around 2,500 units.



Outlander 2.0 PHEV Auto

The greater appeal of the 2.0 litre petrol/electric PHEV versions is their low taxation and running costs. Prices range from £32,249 to £43,499 depending on the specification level but they all use the same drivetrain with the same 4×4 facility. These prices include The Government's £2,500 Plug-in Vehicle Grant. The low CO2 emissions mean that currently there is no charge for VED road tax, they are London Congestion Charge free, company car Benefit-in-Kind tax is just 7% and businesses can write-down 100% of the purchase cost in

the first year of ownership against profits chargeable for Corporation Tax.

When it comes to fuel economy the official quoted 166 mpg probably is unrealistic unless the plug-in charging from the mains is done on a daily basis. But using a petrol engine as well does do away with long journey mileage anxiety with its 542 miles range between fuel fill ups and a full electric charge. In theory if used 100% of the time in EV mode no petrol would be used at all as its 33 mile range between charges easily exceeds the Department of Transport's official figure of our UK daily mileage being 21.6 miles. Mitsubishi says it is only after journeys of 100 miles or more does a diesel powered SUV of this size become more economical to run in terms of mpg, but not for taxes.

During a brief test drive around hilly Cotswold roads and a long section of driving over muddy country estate tracks the test drive fuel economy using both petrol and electric power was an overall 36.2 mpg according to the vehicle's onboard computer. This was disappointing given the unrealistic official EU test figures but in the past I have achieved anywhere between 50 and 100+ mpg. With a total of 203 hp from the engine and twin 60 kW electric motors plus the 190 Nm (140 lb.ft) of torque with its standard-fit automatic gearbox there is ample power for normal road use. Officially the top speed is 106 mph and the zero to 62mph acceleration time is 11 seconds.

With its heavy battery pack and twin electric motors the handling is not as agile as the Outlander diesel on winding country roads but the ride is comfortable and open road cruising at 70mph is relaxed. Off road performance is good enough for muddy tracks and grass covered fields but it is no 'mud-plugger'. If required as a tow vehicle it has a maximum braked towing weight of 1,500 kg (3,307 lb.).





Outlander 2.2 Diesel Manual

I also had the opportunity to drive the revised 2017 specification Outlander seven seater 2.2-litre turbodiesel with AWD and a manual gearbox, although auto transmission is also available. Prices start from £24,999 and run up to £33,499 through three levels of specification. All versions use a 150 hp four cylinder engine developing 380 Nm (280 lb.ft) of torque from 1,750rpm. The manual models return 53.3 mpg in the Combined Cycle and our Cotswold roads drive returned an encouraging real-life figure of 48.7 mpg. The CO2 emissions are 139 g/km so currently VED road tax is £130 every year. Company car drivers will pay 27% Benefit-in-Kind tax. The automatic transmission figures are Combined Cycle 154 g/km so VED is £185 and BIK tax 31%.

The 2017 updates include the new Dynamic Shield front end body design, a new interior centre console, mood lighting, shark fin antenna, electric parking brake for the automatic, heated steering wheel, LED front lights, blind spot warning, rear cross traffic alert and a 360-degree camera for automatic models. Changes have been made to the suspension and steering systems to improve handling. Like its PHEV versions the diesel Outlander has a five-year/62,500 mile warranty.

My test drive version had the mid-range grade 3 specification and manual gearbox, and was priced at £27,899. It proved to be very well equipped, with roomy interior space, although getting the front seats back far enough was tight and most versions have seven seats. The ride comfort and handling has certainly improved and the as our fuel economy figures show for such a large vehicle it is cost effective to run. Top speed is 124 mph and zero to 62 mph takes 10.2 seconds. The handling and ride comfort felt significantly improved over previous versions and on winding country roads the diesel Outlander proved to be more agile than the PHEV version and it has a greater braked towing weight of 2,000 kg (4,409 lb). Both the diesel and PHEV models have a selectable multi-mode 4WD system.

VERDICT

For customers wanting a multi-seat large SUV for robust use, which is comfortable, spacious and can cope with on and off road driving then the diesel models are the ones to choose and they are cheaper to buy and more fuel efficient for high mileage drivers. However it is the low tax and running costs provided by the PHEV models that have proved most popular with customers. As always when buying a new or used car it is a pure matter of choice which we are still lucky enough to have.

For: Proven high sales record, official low CO2 emissions, excellent fuel economy potential, very low tax costs, London Congestion Charge free, improved styling and specification, all-electric power driving range extended, 2WD or 4WD on-demand traction.

Against: Limited off road driving capability, disappointing fuel economy in some long run conditions so short runs are best for better fuel consumption.



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

Mitsubishi Outlander 2.0 PHEV, Auto, AWD. (Best selling Outlander model). Price: '5hs' version £43,499 including the Government's Plug-in Vehicle Grant of £2,500.

Drivetrain: 2.0 litre, four cylinder DOHC petrol engine with a 60 kW front electric motor driving the front wheels through an automatic gearbox and a 60 kW rear

electric motor driving the rear wheels, combined power output 203 hp.

Performance:

0-62 mph: 11 seconds.

Top speed: 106 mph.

Fuel consumption: Officially 166 mpg (36.2 mpg on test including off-road driving), 33 miles electric power only driving range.

Emissions and taxation: CO2 41 g/km, VED road tax £0, BIK company car tax 7%, London Congestion Charge free.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,695 mm (15.40 ft), W 1,800 mm (5.91 ft), H 1,710 mm (5.61 ft), boot/load space 463 to 1,602 litres (16.35 to 56.57 cu.ft), five doors/five seats.