

Road beat: Outlander a great example of high value



Mitsubishi Outlander has nearly everything a driver would want. Photos/Larry Weitzman

By Larry Weitzman

As reported recently here, Mitsubishi is on a roll with a continuing sales growth exceeding 20 percent in 2015 and continuing into the first three months of 2016. Competition has made the automobile into the good car business. No one makes a bad car anymore. There are good cars and better cars, and the defining of better cars has also become more difficult. And they all are safe cars and as such “value” has become an important consideration. Customers also want attractive cars along with great interiors.

Mitsubishi highly refreshed new Outlander is a great example

of high value. First are its looks. Its clean, simple shape has just enough detail and schmaltz to make it very pleasing to look at with a strong, well-done character line and superb window lines and shape done in perfect proportions with respect to the overall body. The front end is more detailed while cohesive, making a smooth, rounded transition into the rest of the body. Anyone who doesn't like its appearance could be labeled a Mr. Magoo. But a real positive is that you don't have to be a Mr. Magoo to own one.

Outside dimensions put the Outlander into the category of a small-midsize crossover SUV with a length of just 185 inches or about 5 inches shorter than your average mid-size car. But at 71-inches wide and 66-inches tall, it is of average dimensions. Wheelbase is 105 inches, which is identical to the smaller Outlander Sport (172-inches long) and both share a front and rear track of 61 inches and identical widths meaning that both vehicles share the same basic chassis and running gear, except for the Outlander GT tested here which receives a 224 hp 3.0L V-6 instead a 166 hp 2.4L inline four shared by the other Outlander models and all Outlander Sport models. While the bodies are similar, the Outlander gets the better looks because of the stretch of 13 inches and third row seating for two.



Specifications

Price as tested \$35,195

Engine 3.0L SOHC, 24 valve

V-6 224 hp @ 6,250 rpm

215 lb.-ft. of torque @
3,750 rpm

Transmission

Six speed torque converter
automatic

Configuration

Transverse mounted front
engine/FWD/AWD

Dimensions

Wheelbase 105.1 inches

Length 184.8 inches

Width 71.3 inches

Height 66.1 inches

Track (f/r) 60.6/60.6 inches

Ground clearance 8.5

Weight 3,593 pounds

Weight distribution (f/r)
57/43%

Fuel Capacity 15.8

Wheels 18X7 inch alloys

Tires 225/55X18 inch all
season

Steering lock to lock 3.3
turns

Cargo capacity behind front
row/second row/third row
63.3/34.2/10.3 cubic feet

Tow capacity 3,500 pounds

Performance

0-60 mph 7.37 seconds

50-70 mph 4.14 seconds

50-70 mph uphill 6.33
seconds

Top speedwell into triple
digits

Fuel economy EPA rated
20/27/23 mpg

city/highway/combined.
Expect 23 overall in rural
country driving 29-30 mpg on
the highway at legal speeds.

Mitsubishi's 3.0L SOHC, 24 valve V-6 has been in their stable for some time now and is one of the smoothest V-6's in the business while creating a nice throaty sound. At full tilt boogie it will punch out 224 hp at 6,250 rpm with some serious mid-range torque which peaks at a low 3,750 rpm giving the throttle serious reflexes in normal driving. With a curb weight just shy of 3,600 pounds and a slick six speed torque converter, paddle shifting automatic it will scamper from 0-60 mph in a fairly quick 7.37 seconds. When I got my driver's license, there were only a handful of production cars in the world that could do that.

With AWD and the V-6 comes a towing capacity of 3,500 pounds which should be equal to a 20-foot V-8 powered bow rider.

Passing performance is right on target considering the 0-60 mph time with a level 50-70 mph simulated pass taking 4.14 seconds and the same pass up a steep grade only slowing that time to 6.33 seconds. Even in aggressive driving there is no "brown out" to be found here. The throttle is very responsive. If there is anything lacking, it is the fuel economy with EPA ratings of 20/27/23 mpg city/highway/combined. It proved to be about 10 percent better than that with the trick radar cruise control set at 70 mph as it showed an average of 29-30 mpg. Overall the Mitsu averaged about 23 mpg as the EPA number shows. Those numbers are about average for most V-6 competitors in its class. According to the EPA, the four cylinder should improve economy by 3-4 mpg and FWD should add another MPG.

Suspension is state of the art MacPherson struts up front and a multilink system bringing up the rear. Both ends receive stab bars. Steering is an electrically powered rack and pinion

but it is a bit slow at 3.3 turns lock to lock. Mitsu spent some time increasing structural rigidity and it shows as handling is sporty, with accurate steering, body roll control, good feedback and plenty of grip. It will dance with the best of them when darting through the twisties. Turning circle is a tight 35 feet. Great looking 18X7 inch alloys shod with 225/55 series rubber also increase driver confidence.

Another area of improvement is ride quality. It's quieter, smoother and with less NVH than some competitors. It feels like an all new vehicle. Spinning just 2,000 rpm at 70 mph there is no engine noise and with particular attention given to window sealing and other details it is remarkably quiet with respect to wind and road noise.

Safety is second to none, four wheel discs, an alphabet soup of acronyms and with the GT Touring package (\$3,350) you get Nav, forward collision mitigation, radar cruise and lane departure warning. It was the only option on my tester, even carpeted floor mats are standard. Stopping distance from 40 mph was a very short 41 feet.

Now it gets better. The Outlander has a beautiful leather interior, in this case a tan perforated leather. The overall theme is sophisticated, yet simple luxury. Most all panels are soft touch, hard plastic need not apply. Shapes and function are well integrated into a very easy to use complete instrument panel. It doesn't take a three-unit college course to get up to speed, with about the only "complaint" being the radio volume and tuning knobs could be just a bit bigger, but other than that it is easy to use with plenty of simple presets.

Oh, and those seats are very comfortable and with three rows and seven seatbelts it can carry the load with still over 10 cubic feet of cargo behind the third row. There are over 63 cubes behind the front row and 34 cubes behind the second row. That should satisfy most Home Depot runs. My AWD tester had a

reasonable 15.8 gallon fuel tank. Front wheel drive versions get a 16.6 gallon tank.

Now here is the value, pricing for this fully loaded, top of the line model is \$30,995 plus the boat from Okazaki, Japan (\$850). The GT Touring package brought the total to \$35,195. That's real value and Mitsu throws in a 5 year/60,000-mile bumper to bumper warranty and a 10 year/100,000-mile powertrain warranty.

Larry Weitzman has been into cars since he was 5 years old. At 8 he could recite from memory the hp of every car made in the U.S. He has put in thousands of laps on racetracks all over the Western United States.