

Road Beat: 2018 Mitsubishi Outlander is a steal



The 2018 Mitsubishi Outlander provides big bang for the buck. Photos/Larry Weitzman

By Larry Weitzman

We always hear the words bang for the buck or big value, but here is a vehicle that personifies the term, the 2018 Mitsubishi Outlander. First it has good looks. The lines are pleasant with no chances taken. Its proportions are also about perfect. The window line, the two-box shape, the sleek grille into which the body protrudes a bit as the fenders round into its simple design. Bright metal adorns its extremities and a single upper character line is used to tie the vehicle together in one cohesive package. It is a good-looking ride, taking little chances. Many people asked what kind of SUV is

that? It's all good and Mitsubishi should be happy.

But what really makes this is reality. The price, which I will discuss first as its most important, is just \$32,260, including the boat from Okazaki, Japan, for this 99 percent Japanese produce CUV. And it's got everything standard including the \$3,000 SEL Touring package which gives it things like collision warning, land departure warning, adaptive cruise, automatic high beams (a superb feature), glass moon roof, Rockford Fosgate audio, Multiview camera system, LED headlights and fogs and even a heated steering wheel. It even has a GPS which gives you lat/long coordinates down to the second, so if you were searching for a sub in the Pacific it would be great. But it didn't have a moving map. What's up with that?

In other words, \$32 large gets you a loaded, AWD, yes AWD, big compact SUV with three rows of seats. Leather is also standard. Not much else comes close in value, maybe a Mazda CX-5 which is the top of the class, but even the Mazda doesn't have Multiview.



Specifications

Price \$32,260 all in

Engine

Inline four cylinder 2.4L
SOHC, 16 valve 166 hp @
6,000

162 lb.-ft. of torque @

4,200 rpm

3.0L V-6 SOHC, 24 valve (GT model) 224 hp @ 6,250 rpm

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

Transmission

CVT

Six speed automatic (V-6)

Configuration

Transverse mounted engine/front wheel/AWD

Dimensions

Wheelbase 106.1 inches

Length 184.8 inches

Width 71.3 inches

Height 67.3 inches

Ground clearance 8.5 inches

Track (f/r) 60.6/60.8 inches

Weight 3,527 pounds

GVWR

Weight distribution (f/r)

56/44 percent

Fuel capacity 15.8 gallons (AWD)

Cargo capacity (behind first row/2nd row/3rd row)

63.3/34.2/10.3 cubic feet

Wheels 18X7 inch alloys

Tires 225/55X18

Steering lock to lock 3.3 turns

Turning circle 34.8 feet

Performance

0-60 mph 8.78 seconds

50-70 mph 4.58 seconds

50-70 mph uphill 8.18 seconds

Top speed Who cares. It will certainly out run a Brink's truck

Fuel economy EPA rated at 24/29/26 mpg city/highway/combined Expect 26 mpg overall in rural/country/suburban driving. 32 mpg on the highway at legal speeds.

So, what's the catch? It's only a 2.4L (a 3.0L V-6 is optional) inline four banger, an engine designed by a consortium of Chrysler, Hyundai and Mitsubishi. But it is surprising spunky, especially considering its meager 166 hp rating (at 6,000 rpm) and 162 pounds of twist at 4,200 rpm. But these are very big horses and pounds (sort of like the British pound in 1968). Driving all four wheels as the computer deems necessary via its all wheel control system through a CVT tranny there is no torque steer as it romps from 0-60 mph in 8.78 seconds. Not bad for a 3,500-pound CUV.

Passing is equally spry with a 50-70 mph level run taking 4.58 seconds and the same run up a 6-7 percent grade only slowing that time by less than 4 seconds to 8.18 seconds. That's what's called overachieving. And it feels responsive, especially tip-in where it can sometimes really jump off the line. It has a very responsive throttle and during passing maneuvers going up the Sierra on Highway 50, the Outlander performed admirably. It is the little engine that could.

That little engine pays dividends in fuel economy, with an EPA rating of 24/29/26 mpg city/highway/combined, but it does much better averaging a good 26 mpg overall in aggressive driving and 32.1 mpg at a constant 70 mph on a level highway in a two-way run. The engine spins a reasonably low and inaudible 2,200 rpm at 70 mph. Backing those numbers up was a 30.3 mpg average

for my entire 210-mile trip to Carson City and back, ascending the Sierras from both sides. Fuel tank is an average 15.8 gallons. A front wheel drive version gets 16.6 gallons. Go figure, it should be the other way around as the FWD should get another mpg or so.

If there is a downside to this Outlander, its handling. It has decent creds, all wheel independent suspension with stab bars at both ends, 18 x 7 inch alloys shod with 225/55 tires and it has a wide 61-inch track. But steering is a bit slow at 3.3 turns lock to lock and on center feel is only fair. There is too much play when going straight ahead, enough so I could notice and demonstrate with steering wheel movement. And handling seems more disconnect than other compact CUVs. If you are a boy racer, you might notice. Otherwise, I am just making mention. Turning circle is tight at under 35 feet.

Ride is another area the Mitsu suffers a bit. While it is smooth and quiet on smooth roads and even over mild undulations, heavy chop enters the cabin a bit more than in some others in this class. And it is running a slightly taller 55 series tire which should help. There is a bit more head tossing as well. Ten years ago, it would be considered a fantastic overall ride, but ah, progress.

Safety does not take a back seat even in the third row, Outlander has it all as mentioned about. About the only thing missing is lane keep assist, found in much more expensive rides. Its headlights are fantastic, with a sharp low beam cut off and a deep, wide breath. Even the LED parking/fog lights are remarkably bright. I almost drove with them only by mistake. Almost one foot in diameter disc brakes were excellent.

Interior is done with quality. Lots of soft touch on the dash and doors. Comfortable leather seats, while looking a bit flat actually do a great job in coddling your backside. Second row seat is also roomy, but the third row is good for pre-teens.

Instruments are simple, large, legible and well laid out with a tach and speedo flanking the multi-functional trip computer. Perfect. The center stack deserves special mention. While it's a touch screen it is only of the most intuitive and easiest to use. The touch screen is basically electronic buttons. The HVAC below is knobs, dials and push buttons. Again, simple and perfect. It's not a BMW which requires an instore "genius" a couple of hours to explain the systems.

Outlander can carry the load. Passenger volume is over 128 cubes and cargo behind the third row is still over ten cubes. Behind the first row with its flat floor is over 63 cubes and over 34 behind the second row. I had a 65-inch flat screen in the box easily stowed flat on the floor. It was during Black Friday and I got to the discount warehouse a half hour after opening at 7am, they had free coffee for everyone and I was in and out in about 15 minutes with a loader helping me put the TV in. Black Friday was a good Friday. He even knew how to drop the seats and asked about the Mitsu. He was impressed, more so when advised him of the sticker price.

It all adds up to the biggest bang for the buck, \$32 large for a very competent, loaded, near luxo CUV. I can easily overlook its small faults and just tell myself, so it won't be my weekend track car, but it will do double duty as a fantastic family adventure vehicle, on and off road. And I won't cry all the way to the bank.

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.