



Jim Barnett



Challenger returns

The Challenger mid-size four-wheel-drive wagon is back – after four years. It offers superior ride and comfort, the option of five or seven seats, and represents value for money. Mitsubishi sees it as an ideal family vehicle with serious off-road credentials.

It sports a full ladder-frame chassis and shares much of its underpinnings with Triton. But Challenger has all-coil suspension which is calibrated more toward on-road comfort than is Triton's load-carrying, leaf-sprung rear end.

Challenger comes with Mitsubishi's Super Select 4x4 system (as does Pajero). So, one can drive it in either two- or four-wheel drive on any surface. A further boost to its off-road credentials is 220mm of ground clearance, bash plate protection to major under-body components and a rear diff lock, which is standard across the range.

The five-seat entry Challenger LS is the only manual in the range and comes to the market at a competitive \$44,490. Its standard features include:

- » Seventeen-inch alloy wheels

- (with full-sized spare).
- » Roof rails.
- » Climate-control air conditioning.
- » Cruise control.
- » Trip computer.
- » Leather-bound steering wheel with cruise and audio function buttons.
- » Power windows.
- » Remote keyless entry.
- » Central locking.
- » Single CD with six speakers and RCA jacks for MP3 player connection.
- » Six airbags.
- » Active stability control and traction control.
- » Multi-mode ABS with electronic brake force distribution.

Optioning a five-speed automatic transmission with manual mode to LS adds an extra \$2,500. The seven-seat option, which includes standard rear air conditioning and automatic transmission, takes the price to \$48,890.

Challenger is only available with a new 2.5-litre common-rail intercooled turbo diesel engine. Code-named 4DD56HP, this spirited engine produces 131kW of power at 4,000rpm and 400Nm of torque at 2,000rpm when paired with a manual

transmission, and 350Nm at 1,800rpm when coupled with the automatic transmission.

Mitsubishi speaks of fuel efficiency of 8.3 litres/100km for LS manual and 9.8 litres/100km for all auto variants.

No one could mistake this new model for anything other than a descendant of the old Challenger, but it is far more stylish.

A modern grille, big alloy wheels, roof rails, bee-sting antenna and a bolder rear quarter give Challenger a fresh, modern look.

Inside, it has much in common with Triton, particularly its dashboard and door trims. The driver's seat comes with a height-adjuster; and the driving position and visibility are generally good.

The 60/40 split-fold seats of the second row can accommodate three adults. Legroom is generous and both rear seats, which can tumble forward for additional cargo space, have slide and recline functions.

With the flat floor measuring 1,017mm long and up to 1,375mm wide with the rear seats in place, the cargo space is generous.

Third-row seats (on seven-seat models) are stored under the cargo floor. One accesses Challenger's full-sized spare wheel from underneath the vehicle.

Challenger rolls away the kilometres with ease on the highway. The relatively quiet diesel performs well across the board, as long as the turbo is kept on boost (above 1,700rpm).

The manual gearbox is light, flexible and well matched to the lively diesel. Overtaking is a breeze; and, with tyres deflated to 16psi, Challenger gives a credible performance on soft beaches and difficult sand hills. Its Super Select 4x4 system is easy to use and provides the most comprehensive choices available in this type of vehicle.

Fuel tank capacity is just 70 litres, which gives a range of around 550km, with a little in reserve. A *Police Journal* test drive averaged 11.5 litres/100km.

Comfortable, smart-looking and capable, Challenger, in its standard form, represents excellent value for money. This, coupled with Mitsubishi's five-year warranty and roadside assistance package, makes the mid-sized 4x4 worthy of a look.



Flawless in places

The revised Mitsubishi Triton GLX-R dual cab is impressive. It might look the same as its predecessor, but it comes with a bigger tray, a new diesel engine and additional safety equipment. Also revamped are its grille, lights, alloys, seats, instrument cluster and console.

Its 14 per cent larger tray gives Triton better external proportions. The disadvantage is a longer rear overhang, but this sweeps sufficiently upward so as not to affect departure angles.

Mitsubishi has replaced the previous 3.2-litre diesel with a more powerful 2.5-litre common-rail turbo diesel. Changes to the combustion chamber, new injectors, a variable geometry turbocharger and an increase in turbo pressure has the new engine producing 11 per cent more power (131kW at 4,000rpm) and 17 per cent more torque (400Nm at 2,000rpm when mated to a manual transmission).

When coupled with the optional five-speed automatic transmission with manual mode, it produces the same power with torque reduced to 350Nm. Mitsubishi claims a 9 per cent improvement in fuel

efficiency for the manual (8.3 litres/100km), while the auto uses 9.3 litres/100km.

Around the suburbs, Triton is relatively smooth and easy to drive. And, on the highway, where its engine sounds quieter than that of its predecessor, it performs very well. Its strong torque makes light work of long hills and overtaking.

Triton is a walkover on the beach, and, on secondary roads, it performs flawlessly. Up a steep ascent with deep ruts it can lose momentum and spin its wheels – its highway-biased rubber does not help. An optional rear diff lock, however, can make all the difference. And descending the same slope shows that the manual diesel has excellent low-range reduction.

At \$47,990, GLX-R comes with:

- » Super Select (full-time) 4x4 system.
- » Stability control and ABS with EBD.
- » Six airbags.
- » Cruise control.
- » Power windows.
- » Air conditioning.
- » CD audio with MP3 compatibility and six speakers.

Ideal for all

The aggressive “jet-fighter” front end is the biggest external change on the 2010 Mitsubishi Outlander SUV models. Inside are new seat, door and dash trims, a trendy new instrument cluster and USB ports.

The entry LS model comes with the carry-over 2.4-litre, four-cylinder petrol engine (125kW, 226Nm) hooked up to a five-speed manual transmission. The XLS and XLS Luxury models feature the same four-cylinder engine coupled with a continuously variable transmission which is optional on LS.

For more grunt, VR and VRX come with an improved 3.0-litre V6 engine (169kW, 291Nm) coupled with a six-speed automatic transmission with manual mode.

At \$33,240, the entry LS 2.4 manual is not the cheapest in this very crowded market, but it is certainly one of the most capable and flexible. A user-friendly, go-anywhere type of vehicle, Outlander is ideal for young singles, couples and families.

Its firm front seats are comfortable, while the rear 60/40 split-fold seats can slide forward

or backward for enhanced legroom or cargo space. Rear cargo space is generous – the flat floor is deeper than most and comes with a space-saver spare accessed from outside.

The tailgate continues to feature a fold-down bumper section for lower loading access. And, for greater flexibility, Outlander LS auto models can be optioned with a third seat row.

Outlander 2.4 manual performs adequately, becoming more capable as revs build. The smooth engine is relatively quiet and well matched to the equally smooth five-speed.

Some torque steer is evident under harsh acceleration in 2WD, but one can overcome that by selecting 4WD Auto mode. Unlike some in this class, Outlander can be locked in 4WD, providing a 50/50 torque split. Reasonable ground clearance further enhances Outlander’s off-road ability.

Standard items on LS include:

- » Front airbags.
- » ABS with EBD and stability control.
- » Air conditioning.
- » Power windows.
- » Remote locking.
- » Cruise control.
- » Trip computer.
- » USB ports.