

Road Beat: Mitsubishi Outlander Sport shines



The Mitsubishi Outlander Sport is a stout, but compact CUV. Photos/Larry Weitzman

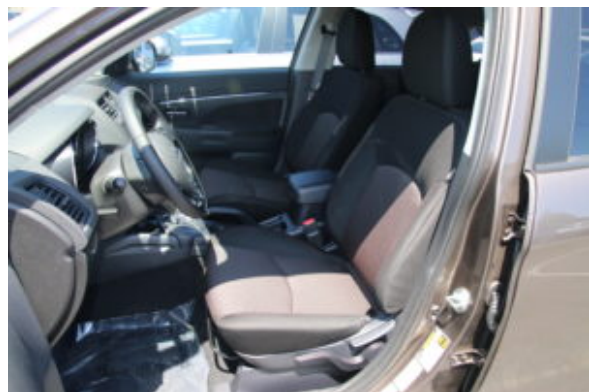
By Larry Weitzman

Good things come in small packages, and you could say this new Mitsu Outlander Sport can be classified as such. And the Outlander Sport is a small CUV being just 171 inches long or about 10 inches shorter than your average compact SUV such as the CR-V and RAV4. But since it is built on the same 105-inch wheelbase as the 185-inch-long Outlander, it is not only stout and has copious second row cabin room, but it means the front and rear overhangs are short giving it outstanding terrain clearance and ground clearance (8.5 inches).

Since the chassis is shared, the overall width remains at over 71 inches. When you slip inside, it almost feels like a full

size SUV. Outside is a very attractive design following in the theme of the bigger brother Outlander. The front end is smooth and attractive and that theme is carried through its side view, only the window line is truncated. While it is still a great looking ride it looks a little stubby. Remember the Sport carries almost the exact same dimensions (height is about an inch shorter) as the bigger Outlander other than in length.

There are some other benefits carried over from the Outlander such as the identical size 18-inch alloy wheels and generous 225/55X18 inch tires and the identical track of 61 inches. They also share engines in the 2.4L DOHC, 16 valve inline four that belts out 168 hp at 6,000 rpm and a 167 pounds of twist at a very low 4,100 rpm, so as you might suspect this motor pulls strong from the bottom end. It is connected to CVT with the ability to shift six preselected gears, although CVTs are most efficient when left alone. It always picks the most efficient ratios. However, the pre selects can be useful for engine braking when going downhill or in heavy traffic at constant speeds.



Specifications

Price as tested \$25,995 plus
\$850 for shipping

Engine 2.4L DOHC, 16 valve
inline four 168 hp @ 6,000
rpm; 167 lb.-ft. of torque @
4,100 rpm

Transmission

CVT automatic with six
preselected gears

Configuration

Transverse mounted front
engine/FWD/AWD

Dimensions

Wheelbase 105.1 inches

Length 171.5 inches

Width 71.3 inches

Height 64.2 inches

Track (f/r) 60.6/60.6 inches

Ground clearance 8.5

Weight 3,109 pounds

GVWR 4,343 pounds

Weight distribution (f/r)
60/40 %

Fuel Capacity 16.6

Wheels 18X7 inch alloys

Tires 225/55X18 inch all
season

Steering lock to lock 3.3
turns

Turning circle 34.8 feet

Cargo capacity behind front
row/second row 49.5/21.7
cubic feet

Performance

0-60 mph 8.41 seconds

50-70 mph 4.89 seconds

50-70 mph uphill 7.22
seconds

Top speedwell into triple
digits

Fuel economy EPA rated
23/28/25 mpg
city/highway/combined.

Expect 27-28 overall in rural country driving and 33-34 mpg on the highway at legal speeds.

This same engine is the base engine for the longer Outlander, but in the Sport the base engine is a 2.0L inline four that produces 148 hp at 6,000 rpm and 145 pounds of twist at 4,200 rpm. In my bigger Outlander test vehicle of a few months ago it had the 224 hp 3.0L V-6. Performance of the Sport while not quite as quick as the Outlander V-6 was still peppy scampering 0-60 mph in 8.41 seconds. Backing that up was a level passing time of 4.89 seconds and an uphill run of 7.22 seconds. Because of the CVT it feels peppy and stronger than the numbers reflect.

Fuel economy is EPA rated at 23/28/25 mpg city/highway/combined. Overall with almost no time spent on the freeway it averaged 27-28 mpg about average for the class. However, in a two-way run to South Lake Tahoe and back to Placerville the Sport returned a remarkable 34.2 mpg averaging 28.0 on the uphill climb and 40.4 mpg returning to Placerville. Part of the fuel mileage secret is the Sport's weight of 3,109 pounds. Its GVWR 4,343 pounds meaning it has a huge payload of over 1,200 pounds. That's stout.

Underpinnings are also similar to the bigger brother's state of the art set-up, MacPherson struts up front and a multilink system out back. It also shares the electronic power steering rack with 3.3 turns lock to lock among other parts bin engineering. Don't get me wrong here, there is nothing wrong with sharing parts and here it's a good thing as the Sport really is the smaller brother of the Outlander which is a great product. If you think about it, they even share powertrains.

Riding on the same wheelbase and almost 500 pounds lighter handling should be good and it is. With those big wheels and

tires it has plenty of grip and it goes where you point it. But that takes some effort in spirited driving as the steering is a bit slow creating a feeling of understeer.

Since the Sport is a shortened Outlander, the Outlander's improved ride quality, quiet and smoothness transfers right over so the Sport while on the firm side of riding quality still delivers an excellent balance. Road and wind noise are inaudible with special attention to window sealing. The engine spins a low 2,200 rpm at 70 mph.

Safety is also second to none with big four wheel discs (front ventilated) stopping the Sport in 41 feet from 40 mph. Its safety inventory includes a full alphabet soup of acronyms, a plethora of airbags and a rear view camera.

Inside is a leather interior and firm comfortable seats with the rear holding three people in reasonable comfort. The instrument panel has a big speedo and tach separated by an information center including trip computer info. The uncomplicated center stack is easy to use. Behind the front seats is 50 cubic feet of cargo volume and 22 cubes are behind the second row, a bit smaller than some other compact CUVs, but remember this Sport is about a foot shorter than those other vehicles it competes with.

Pricing makes the Sport a vehicle you should consider. This full boat, top of the line FWD Sport with leather and no options as delivered to the Road Beat stickers at \$25,995 plus \$850 for the boat ride from Okazaki, Japan. AWD will add \$1,400. The only option package is NAV which stickers for \$1,800. The new Sport shines on standard features and value and looks great in its new Octane Blue. Finally, Mitsubishi is the other car company that warranties their entire car for five years/60,000 miles and the power train for 10 years/100,000 miles.

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.