

# MITSUBISHI OUTLANDER PHEV

By Jim Mc Cauley

Mitsubishi have launched the world's first all-wheel drive, plug-in hybrid SUV which is set to extend the appeal of this new generation of vehicles. Hybrid or twin-powered vehicles represent the

marriage between the internal combustion engine and electric motors in order to improve economy and address environmental issues.



As with petrol and diesel engine technologies, manufacturers have developed their own unique packages for hybrid vehicles with Mitsubishi being one of the first to address electric power and have a car in series production. Now that early expertise based on 40 years of research has been further developed in their Outlander SUV, producing a vehicle that can be truly seen as the leader of the pack, in that it has covered all options in an attractive and well packaged solution. And furthermore, the new Outlander PHEV is not on

sale at a crippling premium over the company's diesel alternative, but at the same price, an initial bonus for pondering customers.

The driving power in the Outlander PHEV is a pair of 80 hp electric motors, one on each axle which provide permanent all-wheel drive. Supporting the power of the electric motors is the company's well proven 119 bhp 2.0 litre petrol engine which essentially sees that adequate battery charge is always available, but can additionally directly complement the electric motor on the front axle as the need arises. The total motive power package is rated at 200 hp, indicating the performance potential of the vehicle. As well as the on-board generation of electricity, the Outlander PHEV can be plugged into the mains for a full battery charge which will allow it to cover around 32 miles before the petrol engine needs to cut in. So immediately it can be seen that relatively short drives, which are statistically what we most use our vehicles for, can be covered for a few pence of mains electricity, while on longer journeys with the petrol engine support, the range from its 45 litre fuel tank is in excess of 500 miles.

On road, and with a fully charged battery pack a simple 'Ready' on the instrument panel allows you to drive off silently with no tailpipe emissions. Clear graphics on the display



highlight the power source and also indicate when regenerative braking further assists in charging the batteries.

With automatic power delivery, there are just two choices on the 'gear-lever', forward or reverse and the vehicle drives no differently from any other engine option. The Outlander PHEV can complete the benchmark 0-62 mph sprint in just 11 seconds with mid range acceleration always instantaneous en route to a top speed of 106 mph. With the weight distribution carefully balanced throughout the vehicle, it rides well and steers competently disguising its high-tec packaging to feel like any other SUV competitor, and confirming its engineering excellence as well as driver appeal.

Keeping to the mainstream feel, the cabin is also biased towards traditional layout, reinforcing the fact that this is an alternative choice in the Outlander model range rather than something this has to be different for the sake of it. A cavernous cabin provides excellent room with comfortable seating for all occupants as well as a large boot area. And this traditional familiarity extends to the exterior in a vehicle that carries an elegance in a softer design statement than is generally associated with SUVs.

But the true appeal of the vehicle is in its economy and low running costs. While the limited mileage official economy test records the model at 148 mpg in mixed driving, the truth is that this could be exceeded if the majority of driving was done with frequently mains charged batteries using the vehicle mostly in electric (EV) mode only. For longer journeys, when the engine would also be used as a generator or front axle power support, the figure would be much less. However, in several days mixed driving on local roads with overnight charging, I was able to comfortably exceed the official mileage figure for the diesel Outlander.

With a CO2 emissions figure of just 44 gms/km, the Outlander PHEV is exempt annual road tax and is particularly appealing for business users with a BIK tax rating of only 5%.

Equipment-wise, the test vehicle was in basic GX3h trim but includes 7 airbags, 18-inch alloys, hill-start assist, rear parking sensors, automatic lights and wipers, dual zone climate control, fabric / leather-look upholstery, cruise control with speed limiter, and Bluetooth connectivity as the highlights in a comprehensive specification list.

Including the Government grant of £5,000, the Outlander PHEV is available for £28,249 and is covered by Mitsubishi's comprehensive 3-year / unlimited mileage warranty, with 5 years support on electrical components.