

Mitsubishi Space Wagon

Featuring 2.4GDI GLX



BECAUSE THEY OFFER ACRES OF SPACE, huge practicality and almost limitless versatility, it's not hard to see why people-carriers, multi-purpose vehicles – call them what you will – have proved enormously successful in recent years.

The Renault Espace is widely regarded as having established the breed, yet it's easy to forget that Mitsubishi's first Space Wagon, the Nissan Prairie and Toyota's Space Cruiser (remember them?) all entered the showrooms at least a year before the Espace.

Of late, the MPV camp has split into two (even three) distinct factions, with smaller, more affordable so-called mini-MPVs – even though many seat only five – proving the more popular of the two. This “second-division” MPV camp is epitomised by the hugely successful Renault Scenic, now into its second generation, and more recently, by Vauxhall's Zafira, whose ingenious Flex7 seating not only chairs up to seven occupants, but also avoids having to leave some (or even all) of the seats at home when cargo-carrying duties are called for.

Mitsubishi, arguably, got there first, with its first- and second-generation Space Wagons effectively straddling what are now termed the MPV1 and MPV2 classes. This

pair *could* seat up to seven, but both were somewhat cramped alongside full-sized MPVs like the Galaxy. Now Mitsubishi, too, has elected to have a foot in each camp. With its half estate-car, half mini-MPV Colt Space Star taking on the Scenic class, this allows a bigger and more sophisticated third-generation Space Wagon to compete more favourably in the Galaxy class.

The newcomer seats seven (or six with individual mid-row “captain's seats” in the range-topping GLS), and boasts roomier, more up-to-date accommodation and a significantly expanded features list over its predecessor. What's more, it has an ace up its sleeve – or, more accurately, under its bonnet.

This isn't the first application of *direct*-injection technology to a petrol engine; Mitsubishi debuted its eco-friendly, lean-burn Gasoline Direct Injection (GDI) engine in the Carisma. But it's the first time this revolutionary technology – promising diesel economy, yet more power and lower emissions than either a diesel or a conventional multi-point injection petrol engine – has featured in a Galaxy-class vehicle.

This new 2.4-litre, four-cylinder GDI engine sports a healthy 147bhp and drives the Space Wagon's front

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PERFORMANCE

Acceleration time in seconds

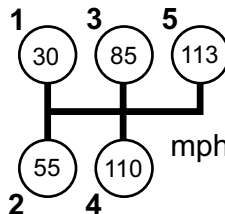
mph	30	40	50	60	70
THROUGH THE GEARS		2.0	4.3	7.8	11.7
IN 5TH GEAR		7.1	13.6	20.8	28.6
IN 4TH GEAR		4.6	9.2	14.1	19.1

20 mph	30	40	50	60	70
5TH/4TH SPEED RANGES		14.5/9.7		13.7/9.5	
			13.6/9.2		15.0/9.9

Maximum speeds

REVS PER MINUTE	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
		5950*		5950	4840

* for best acceleration



FUEL CONSUMPTION

Fuel grade: unleaded, 95 octane petrol	
Type of use - air conditioning off*	mpg
In the city - heavy traffic	16
In the country - quiet driving	35
Typical mpg overall	30½
Realistic tank range†	56 litres/375 miles

†based on fuel gauge/warning lamp and filling station experience - not nominal tank capacity

*with air conditioning switched on, consumption will increase by 2-4% in winter and 4-8% in summer

FOR THE TECHNICAL

ENGINE

Type front-mounted, transverse four cylinder with alloy block and head; five main bearings

Size 86.5 x 100.0mm = 2351cc

Power 147bhp at 5500rpm

Torque 166 lb ft at 3500rpm

Valves twin belt-driven overhead camshafts actuating four valves per cylinder via roller rocker arms

Fuel/ignition electronically-controlled direct-injection petrol, integrated with distributorless ignition. 63-litre fuel tank, with low-level warning lamp

TRANSMISSION

Type five-speed manual; front-wheel drive. Electronically-controlled 4-speed automatic standard on GLS, option on GLX

Mph per 1000rpm 23.3 in 5th, 18.5 in 4th

Rpm at 70mph 3000

CHASSIS

Suspension front: independent by MacPherson damper/struts, coil springs, lower arms and anti-roll bar. Rear: independent, sub-frame mounted semi-trailing arms, coil springs. Telescopic dampers front and rear

Steering rack and pinion with hydraulic power assistance; 3.3 turns between full locks. Turning circles average 11.5m between full locks, with 18.4m circle for one turn of the wheel

Wheels 6.0JJ steel (alloy on GLS) with 205/65R15 94H (Yokohama Aspec A300) on test car; cradle-mounted full-size spare

Brakes ventilated discs front and rear, with vacuum servo. Electronic anti-lock control standard on GLX and GLS

SAFETY AND SECURITY FEATURES

Assessed on their effectiveness and convenience (the more black blobs the better)

Seatbelts

front ●●●●○ rear ●●●●○

Door locking

central locking? ●●●●○

remote control? ●●●●○

auto window closure? ●●●●○

deadlocks? ●●●●○

Head restraints

front ●●●●○ rear ●●●●○

Interior

safety padding ●●●●○

driver's airbag? ●●●●○

other airbags? (Side airbags standard on GLS) (1) ●●●●○

side impact protection ●●●●○

Luggage

secure from interior/hidden from view ●●●●○

Alarm

engine immobilised? ●●●●○

Fuel anti-spillage

standard on test car ☒ factory fitted option ☐ not available ☒

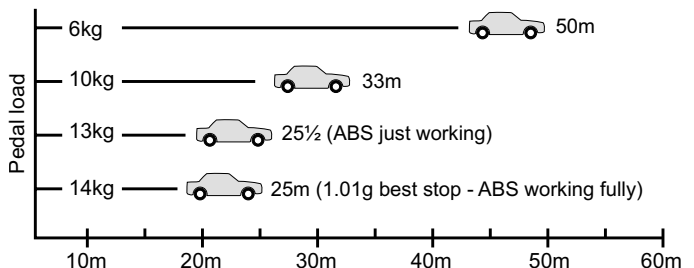
Euro NCAP crash test results - Front/side impact rating ★★★★★
- Pedestrian test rating ★★★★★

BRAKES

Pedal feel ●●●●○	Behaviour in an emergency ●●●●○	Handbrake ●●●●○
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Dry road stopping distance from 50mph (with standard ABS)

A good-to-average best stop is about 26m at 15-20kg pedal load



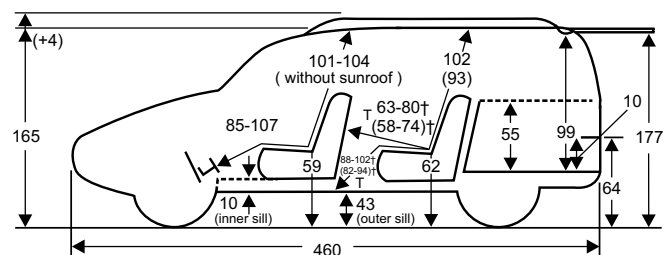
Fade test: pedal load required for a moderate (34m/.75g) stop:

10kg at start of test, 10kg at end of test (Ideal brakes show no change)

MEASUREMENTS

Centimetres (3rd row seats in brackets)

Five-door MPV

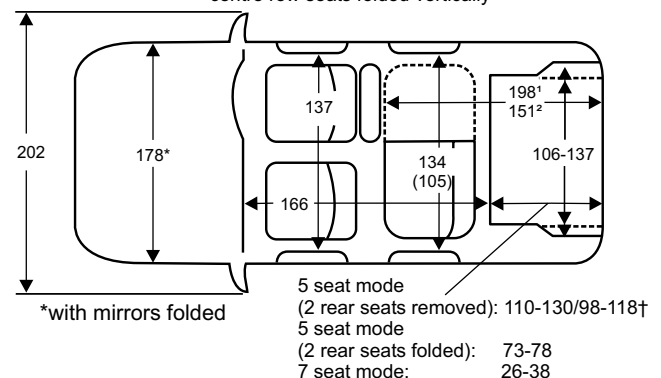


T: typical back seat space behind medium-sized front occupants

†: with centre-row seats fully forwards/fully back

¹ centre row seats folded flat

² centre row seats folded vertically



*with mirrors folded

wheels via either the standard-fare five-speed manual 'box we sampled or, on dearer models, by a four-speed "fuzzy logic" automatic. Three trim levels – GL, GLX and top-notch GLS – form the line-up, equipped with across-the-board essentials such as power steering, central locking, electric windows, a sunroof and twin airbags. These are joined on dearer versions by front foglamps, alloy wheels, air conditioning and a CD autochanger, or Mitsubishi's optional GPS satellite navigation system, whose neat, centrally located display screen doubles to also present audio and trip computer information to the driver.

The Space Wagon has put on quite a few kilograms as well as centimetres, though. Nevertheless, the smooth-revving, ever-eager engine makes a fair fist of propelling this portly 2200kg people-carrier, resulting in a mount that will out-sprint the two-litre Peugeot 806 and derv-burning Galaxy and Renault Espace, but not the almost identically powerful 2.3-litre petrol Galaxy.

Close to hand, the front console-mounted gear lever, like the rest of the controls, proves anything but a chore to slave over, while the blend of a willing power unit, relaxed, easy-going gearing and comfortable surroundings makes for a relaxing drive. Body roll is naturally more pronounced than in your average family saloon (though this discourages over-zealous bend-swinging), and the Space Wagon can feel a touch floaty over undulating surfaces, especially when running well laden. The trade-off, though, is a compliant ride for most of the time, but we have to admit that Mitsubishi's third-generation people-carrier isn't the most rewarding or involving member of this class to drive.

On the economy front, we netted a more-than-respectable 30½mpg in our usual mixed bag of motoring – ranging from a fair-to-middling 35mpg on our rigidly controlled gentle jaunt, to a more worrying mid-teens thirst at the heavy-footed end of the spectrum. At our overall figure, the big fuel tank affords over 370 miles between fill-ups. Given the Space Wagon's size, weight and respectable performance, this sort of economy is better than merely acceptable. However, as we discovered in an earlier encounter with Mitsubishi's GDI engine, so far, this technology seems unable to deliver the "leaps-and-bounds" gain in real-world fuel economy that we've been led to expect.

With a non-removable (albeit sliding, split-folding and jack-knifing) bench-type centre-row seat, the Space Wagon's fittings and furnishings lack the ultimate versatility that many in this class offer. That said, the interior is roomy and comfortable, there's a generous cupholder and cubby-hole count, and the Space Wagon has plenty of tricks up its sleeve, to give the "Sharalaxy" and the Peugeot 806, Citroën Synergie and Fiat Ulysee trio a good run for their money. The back-row seats can be double-flipped forwards or removed altogether when serious cargo-carrying is called for. And although there's the usual MPV let-down of little luggage space with a full complement of passengers, you can always fall back to using the roof bars that the two dearer versions come with.

The Space Wagon's boxy, square-cut tail and big, high-lifting tailgate pay off when it comes to heaving bulky items on board, further aided by a wide, low-cut sill to load over. Inside, there's quality cut-pile carpeting, strong tie-down hooks, a roller-blind load cover to hide the valuables, plus a secure underfloor tray for less frequently needed nick-nacks. This is rounded off by a useful overhead light, a 12v accessory socket and, finally, a decent interior handle for shutting up shop.

VERDICT

More Space but less Wagon, sums up Mitsubishi's latest "lifestyle" vehicle, which is significantly roomier and offers greater refinement and all-round appeal than its predecessor. Yet at the same time, it studiously follows the trend in this class, rather than setting any new benchmarks or developing a uniqueness all of its own. Neither does it deliver the decisive fuel economy lead that GDI claims on the packet – not the first time we've found this particular technology coming up a shilling or two short of its hype.

Not a clear class-winner, then, but with less tangible benefits, such as Mitsubishi's once-unrivalled three-year, unlimited-mileage warranty, a generous equipment tally and reliability that some makers would kill for taken into account, this third-generation Space Wagon still has a lot to offer and is a realistic alternative to the market-leading Galaxy and Espace pairing.

HOW THE SPACE WAGON COMPARES†	Engine cap/power (cc/bhp)	Revs at 70mph (rpm)	30-70mph through gears (sec)	30-70mph in 5th/4th gears (sec)	Fuel economy (mpg)	Brakes best stop (m/kg)	Maximum legroom - front (cm)	Typical leg/kneeroom - rear (cm)	Steering turns/ (p) circle (m)	Overall length (cm)
MITSUBISHI SPACE WAGON 2.4 GDI [7]	2351/147	3000	11.7	28.6/19.1	30½	25/14*	107	102/80 §	3.3/11.5	460
Ford Galaxy 2.3 [7]	2295/145	3290	11.0	26.3/19.9	29	26/25*	108	104/84	3.3/11.3	462
Honda Shuttle 2.2 (auto) [6]	2156/150	2950	12.2	NA	24½	27½/14*	108	105/72	3.2/12.1	475
Nissan Serena 2.0 [7]	1998/125	3460	11.6	20.1/13.0	28	NA	112	103/94	4.2/10.3	431
Peugeot 806 2.0 [7]	1998/123	3210	13.4	35.1/23.4	30	27/25	102	97/78	3.0/11.8	445
Ford Galaxy 1.9Tdi (110) turbo-diesel [7]	1896/110	2720	14.7	24.0/16.6	42	26½/20*	108	104/84	3.3/11.3	462
Renault Espace 2.2dt turbo-diesel [7]	2188/115	2720	14.0	28.0/18.2	33	27/20*	109	100/83	3.1/10.8	452
† maximum seating capacity in brackets						*with ABS	§ with centre row slid fully back		(p) all power-assisted	