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Latest Mitsubishi L200 Pick-up – First Impressions

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Author: David Miles

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ON THE RIGHT TRACKS - THE NEW MITSUBISHI L200 PICK-UP RANGE...

...David Miles (Miles Better News Agency) reports.

Arriving in UK Mitsubishi Motors showrooms in time for the new registration plate month of September is the new Series 6 L200 Pick-Up range, where the Double Cab versions are the most popular for business, hard graft and leisure uses.

Mitsubishi say the Series 6 is more advanced in terms of technology and safety, more



efficient and cleaner than ever before, quieter and more refined with improved ride and handling, plus it's arguably the toughest looking vehicle Mitsubishi Motors has ever designed and certainly one of the most imposing and rugged pickups in the market today.

For this generation of models no Single Cab versions are available as global sales are too small, so the range consists of Club Cab with two main side doors, and the most popular Double Cab four door variants, and both body styles have five seats and a one-tonne payload.



On the road prices, excluding Vat, range from £21,525 to £32,200. The range starts with 4Life Club Cab and Double Cab versions with 16-inch wheels and geared towards the



workhorse market. The Double Cab specification levels, all with 18-inch alloy wheels, are Warrior manual and auto options, Barbarian man/auto models and Barbarian X with a standard auto gearbox.

As usual there is a wide range of extra cost practical options ranging from styled roll-over bars to roller-shutters or full canopies for the load area together with load area liners plus secure tool and equipment box storage solutions. Competitors are now numerous but the main ones are the Ford Ranger, Toyota Hilux, Nissan Navara, SsangYong Musso, VW Amorak, Isuzu D-Max, Mercedes X-Class - and in the near future a pick-up version of the new Land Rover Defender. Users are many and varied ranging from families, country folk, business drivers attracted by low Benefit-in-Kind tax, farmers, forestry and building industries, Police, Fire and rescue services, a small family business where a van and a car can be substituted by a Double Cab pick-up, contract towing companies, marinas, race circuits - the list is limitless.



Toby Marshall, Sales and Marketing Director for Mitsubishi Motors in the UK told the motoring media at the launch this week (held at the prestigious Wing complex at Silverstone Racing Circuit), the UK is the largest market in Europe for Mitsubishi L200 sales. He expects to sell around 10,000 units in its first full year of sales and more in future.

He added that the out-going L200 range has become the brand's best selling model range after the Outlander PHEV large SUV. The L200 accounts for almost a third of their 31,000 annual new vehicle sales. The UK's pick-up market had overall sales last year of 53,600 units and for the first seven months of this year sales are 31,000, which is a 3% increase on



the same period last year, so whilst new car sales are falling, pick-up sales are increasing. The Ford Ranger is the UK's top selling pick-up range, followed by the L200 and then the Nissan Navara. Customers are attracted by the versatility of uses pick-ups offer, and for company car drivers the significantly lower Benefit-in-Kind tax costs. As an example, because the L200 is homologated as a commercial vehicle, even though it has five passenger seats, it has an annual £260 VED road tax cost and business user BiK costs are a low, compared to a large SUV, £57 a month for a 20% tax payer and £114 a month for the users who pay 40% tax. That is less than a quarter of the BiK tax of a large SUV such as a Land Rover Discovery Sport five seater diesel powered model.

As to which model will be the most popular, Toby Marshall said traditionally higher specification versions sell by far the most and they are anticipating Barbarian and Barbarian X versions to account for a total of 58% with the Warrior level 33% and 4Life 9%. Over 90% of sales will be Double Cab versions and manual sales will be around 52% with auto at 48%.

There is an equal split between fleet and retail/business user-chooser customers.

Production of the Mitsubishi pick-up in single cab form started over 40 years ago in Japan and over 4.7-million have been sold globally to date. But in recent years the L200 models have been built in Thailand.

Customer feedback from around the World told Mitsubishi they wanted a tougher and more aggressive rugged looking product, rather than the curvy and moulded exterior design adopted for recent generation models.

Although the L200 still retains its tough ladder-frame chassis for legendary robustness, durability and longevity (it's covered by a five years/62,500 miles warranty), there have been changes to the suspension system, also it now has more powerful brakes and larger rear dampers (to improve the on-road handling, and to reduce the cornering bodyroll due to its high riding stance needed for off-road work). Ride comfort has also been improved with impacts from potholes being more cushioned.



Visually the styling changes include the company's 'Dynamic Shield' face which it shares with the Eclipse Cross, the soon to arrive ASX compact SUV and the latest Outlander SUV models. The higher positioning of sleek headlights, plus a wider grille under a higher mounted bonnet, combines to give the L200 a broader and futuristic looking front stance. The width is further amplified by wider front and rear wheelarches (housing 18-inch alloy wheels for most Double Cab models) which are linked with more deeply sculptured front and rear door panels. At the rear are taller new light clusters, LED units on higher spec models and the usual tough tailgate leads to a load area to the same size as outgoing versions so the one tonne payload (1,080kg) is retained. Braked towing capacity is 3.1 to 3.5 tonnes, depending on whether the trailer is twin or triple axle type; this is due to new homologation stability test requirements.

Predominately I am writing about the best-selling Double Cab L200 Series 6 models here and these were the version Mitsubishi unveiled to the UK's motoring media last week at Silverstone. Not that we were allowed anywhere near the racing track which would have been inappropriate for this type of vehicle, but we did undertake driving on local roads as well as trying some rallying and off-road driving and handling activities.

Under the bonnet for all versions is a new 2,268cc, four cylinder turbodiesel engine, which is fully compliant with the new EU6d Temp and WLTP regulations. It produces 150 hp and 400 Nm (295 lb.ft) of torque from 2,000 rpm and is available with the choice of six speed manual or a new six speed automatic transmission. The models have the Mitsubishi Super Select 4WD system, which allows easy shifting between 2WD and 4WD just with the turn of a rotary switch - which can be done travelling on or off road. Hill Descent Control is also fitted. The automatic gearbox models have a new Off-Road mode which controls the engine, transmission and brakes depending upon the terrain. This mode can operate in 4HLC and 4LLC high and low ratio settings, with its central locking differential.



Available for test driving was the L200 Barbarian X top spec model with the new six speed auto gearbox. When assessing performance on winding country roads around the Silverstone area, the very first impression was how much the suspension system had been improved. The ride was much more compliant and the handling well-balanced for such a high-riding vehicle. The suspension over undulating road surfaces actually felt on the soft-side at times which some front end bounce, but with more weight in the vehicle, passengers or a load in the rear, this should even out the ride balance. The steering was light although it needed a plenty of turns of the steering wheel for lock-to-lock use.

The new engine, although less powerful than the outgoing 2.4 litre turbodiesel 154 to 181 hp units, to meet new EU6d Temp and WLTP emission and fuel economy regulations, with 400 Nm (295 lb.ft) of torque from 2,000 rpm, felt strong more or less throughout its rev-range, and quite refined. Top speed is 106 mph for the auto and 108 mph for the manual



models. The usual zero to 62 mph acceleration times are not given for commercial vehicles but my timing suggested around 12.0 seconds for the automatic.

The CO2 emissions are a high WLTP 254 g/km for the auto and 231 g/km for manual gearbox models. This doesn't affect the road tax and company car tax costs as they are considered commercial vehicles. The WLTP fuel economy Combined Cycle figure for the auto is 29.1 mpg and on my road route the figure was better than that at 31.2 mpg. The manual gearbox models have a figure of 32.1 mpg.

Further testing towing 3.5-tonnes with a triple axle trailer showed the new L200 Double Cab to be a willing workhorse; it just shrugged off its burden. The vehicle again proved just how capable it has been and still is despite its new engineering refinement, when off roading. Deep mud, ruts, up and down hills, no problem at all for the sophisticated but practical and easy to use 4WD system.



Most impressive of all was the rallying test driving which really put the L200's handling capabilities, and we drivers through our paces. The slalom test just proved, even with a ladder frame chassis and leaf rear springs used for load carrying durability, with all the electronics such as stability and traction controls and such like, just how capable and safe-handling even in extreme driving conditions the new generation Double Cab is. The revised suspension system proved to be extremely capable in terms of ride comfort and chassis articulation over rough ground at very high speeds.



Whilst the exterior appearance of the latest L200 Club Cab and Double Cab models has a far more aggressive appearance, inside it's rather more of what has been in the past. Yes there is a restyled design for the centre panel of the dashboard with its multifunction display, and the gear shift panel has minor changes with chrome effect trim inserts. There appears to be more soft-touch interior trim finishes in areas like the door cards and fascia trim and there are more storage compartments. It has the longest cab length in its class so there is ample legroom for five adult passengers but some larger people might find the cabin width in the rear a bit of a squeeze. Access through the Double Cab's four side hinged doors is easy



enough but due to its high ground clearance it is a high step up in height if not a high step in interior design. That said it looks well built with very durable upholstery and other trim panels, and for such a large vehicle visibility is good.

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In keeping with new technologies found on passenger cars and SUVs, the L200 Double Cab in its higher spec levels bridges really well the gap between it and large SUVs for driver support and safety systems. Depending on the spec level there is now a multi-around monitor with four cameras, providing the driver with all-round vision of the surroundings, ideal both off road and in car parks where the size of this vehicle can be a drawback. It is 5,305 mm (17.40 ft) long with a wheelbase of 3,000 mm (9.84 ft), it's 1,815 mm (5.95 ft) wide and 1,780 mm (5.84 ft) high; it's big and imposing.

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Also included is Forward Collision Mitigation which detects vehicles and pedestrians ahead, plus there are new safety functions such as Blind Spot Warning, Lane Change Assist and Rear Cross Traffic Alert when reversing. The usual air-con, cruise control and electric front and rear windows are also included, plus connectivity functions. Unfortunately an integrated sat-nav system is not fitted, you need to link your smartphone nav function to the information system which displays the routing on the touchscreen.

VERDICT

In short the latest L200 Double Cab pick-ups are now much closer in specification and safety to conventional passenger cars.

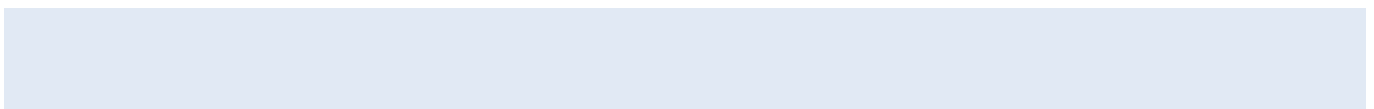
They are less financially painful for company car tax as well because they are classed as commercial vehicles, although driving and spec wise they are now much closer to a well-equipped large SUV. Not only is the new generation L200 Double Cab a big vehicle with big capabilities, it is a big step forwards in terms of driveability and very practical. Definitely



it's on the right tracks to being the market sales leader again.

For: Vastly improved tougher exterior styling, huge payload and towing capacity, much improved ride and handling qualities, very well equipped to modern large SUV safety and driver support standards, strong new diesel engine, clever 2WD/4WD and off road handling technologies, low company car tax costs.

Against: A large vehicle so it can be a handful to park in public spaces, no integrated sat-nav system, costly insurance.





Milestones and Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

Mitsubishi L200 Series 6 Double Cab, Barbarian X 2.2 auto 4WD.

Price: CV on-the-road £32,000.

Engine/transmission: New EU6d Temp compliant 2,268cc, four cylinder all aluminium direct injection turbodiesel, 150 hp, 400 Nm (295 lb.ft) of torque from 2,000 rpm, new six speed auto gearbox with Super Select 2WD/4WD with high/low ratios and Off Road Mode. Performance: 106 mph, 0-62 mph approx 12.0 seconds.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle WLTP 29.1 mpg (31.2 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: WLTP CO2 254 g/km, VED commercial vehicle annual road tax £260, CV Benefit in Kind tax costs £57 for 20% tax payers and £114 for the 40% tax level. Insurance Group: 37.

Warranty: Five years/62,500-miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 5,305 mm (17.40 ft), W 1,815 mm (5.95 ft), H 1,780 mm (5.84 ft), wheelbase 3,000 mm (9.84 ft), 1,080 kg (2,381 lb) payload, braked towing weight 3,100 to 3,500 kg (6,834 to 7,716 lb), four doors/five seats.