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Mitsubishi Eclipse Cross 1.5 Turbo – Road Test

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David Miles (Miles Better Things Agency) assesses Mitsubishi's Eclipse Cross 1.5 Turbo petrol 4WD after a week of use in real life conditions...

After 100 years of autonomy Mitsubishi Motors last year became part of the Renault-Nissan Alliance so the Mitsubishi Eclipse Cross, mid-sized sports SUV/Crossover, could be one of the last models they independently design and manufacture.

Platforms, components and engine sharing between manufacturers are now commonplace to reduce manufacturing costs. The Eclipse Cross was of course designed and developed before their new partnership started. Another new Mitsubishi 4x4, the heavyweight Shogun Sport, arrives soon and was also developed before Mitsubishi joined the Renault-Nissan Alliance



The Mitsubishi Eclipse Cross was introduced to the UK motoring media in February this year and by the end of March 1,714 of them had been sold. The initial line-up has a new 1.5 litre, 163 hp turbo petrol engine with Auto Stop/Go and Eco mode with six speed manual and 2WD or an eight speed CVT auto gearbox and the choice of 2WD and 4WD models. It is a mid-sized SUV sitting between the current Mitsubishi ASX and Outlander SUVs. On-the-road prices start from £21,290 and top out at £29,765. A 2.2 litre 150 hp turbodiesel engine with 4WD and auto gearbox is scheduled to join the line-up later this year.



Depending upon the transmission chosen, the current 1.5 litre petrol models are available with grades 2, 3, 4 and a limited number of First Edition versions. At the media launch Mitsubishi said they expect to sell around 6,500 units of the Eclipse Cross in the UK this

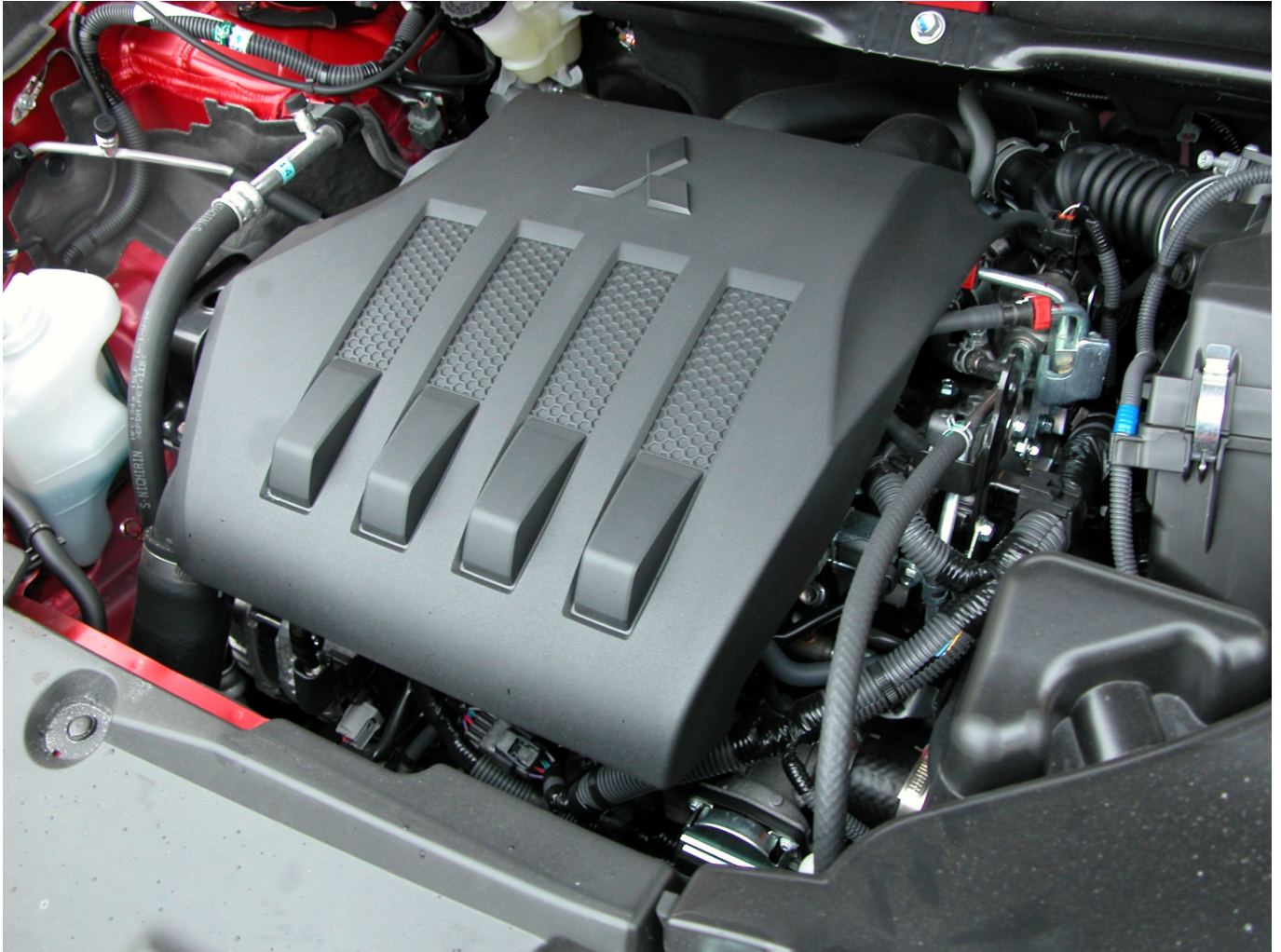


year, 60% to retail customers and with a bias towards customers choosing the automatic transmission and 4WD, and that has proved to be the case with the grade 4 spec level being the most popular, say Mitsubishi.

In the longer term, due to the competitive nature of this over-populated price sensitive sector, it is thought that the 1.5 turbo petrol manual with 2WD and Grade 4 specification could become the main selling model priced at £24,990. Its main competitors include the Peugeot 3008, Nissan Qashqai, Vauxhall Grandland X, VW Tiguan, SEAT Ateca, Skoda Karoq, Kia Sportage, Ford Kuga, Hyundai Tucson, Toyota C-HR, Honda HR-V and Suzuki Vitara/S-Cross ranges.

When attending media launches for new models we professional motoring journalists tend to spotlight the best-selling model and usually we only get a limited time behind the wheel because of the number of vehicles available and the large number of 'scribers' attending. So to get a proper feel of what a new vehicle is all about, and a while after the official launch event has taken place, we get the opportunity to try another version for a longer period. There is nothing more informative than living with a test vehicle for a week or so. Using it on a real-life daily basis to commute to/from work or for long distance work and family travelling plus the usual trips into town will show the vehicle in its true light.

So for my Eclipse Cross week of motoring this time I was allocated the 1.5 turbo petrol with the CVT auto transmission, 4WD and with the Limited Edition specification, but all that added spec put the price up to a more expensive vehicle costing £29,765.



The Eclipse name has been used by Mitsubishi before for a sports car sold mainly in the USA until 2011. Now it has been resurrected for their sports styled Eclipse Cross, adding the word Cross to indicate its Crossover role.

True to its Eclipse heritage the newcomer brings sports coupé exterior styling with a wedge shaped side profile, due to the rising waistline and coupé roofline, plus sculptured door panels and bold wheelarches. At the front is a steeply raked-back front grille and windscreen, whilst the rear has a steeply raked forward tailgate with a roof spoiler, and the window is divided into two parts bisected by a spoiler styled light bar similar to that used by the Toyota Prius and Honda Civic models. The front face has the latest Mitsubishi Dynamic Shield identity where the fog lamps and indicators are set lower within bumper recesses,



while the LED headlights and daytime running lights are located in the main headlamp assemblies. Front and rear skid plates, plastic covered wheelarches and sill mouldings and roof rails add to the SUV styling.

The Eclipse Cross platform is a version of the same one used for the larger Outlander SUV models and notable to assist ride comfort and handling composure it uses a multi-link rear suspension system rather than the more usual, and cheaper, twist beam axle used by the majority of its competitors. The multi-link system means each rear wheel and suspension link reacts individually to undulations, bumps and impacts from potholes rather than transmitting body-roll, shocks and jolts right across and into the vehicle.

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Inside, the front area has a deep dashboard with a horizontal axis design line to split functions between 'Information' for the higher level and 'Operation' for the lower level. The layout also enhances the visual width of the vehicle while the tall centre console helps create a cockpit-like environment in keeping with its sports styling credentials. As standard a 7.0-inch touchscreen sits on top of the dashboard and there is a trackpad controller in the centre console. Thankfully there are proper heating, ventilation and air-con controls rather than having to delve into the touchscreen to operate them. The big downside for me, living with the vehicle for a week, was the lack of a proper integrated sat-nav system offered on any version. Instead Apple CarPlay and Android Auto connectivity functions need to be used to link a mobile phone for sat-nav use. That's not very user-friendly when we are trying to stop mobile phones being operated in cars on the move and what happens when we get into a mobile signal black-spot and it racks up data charges? Older less tech-savvy customers might struggle with this technology and would prefer a proper factory-fitted system.

The interior quality looks good and appears well crafted with carbon and piano black trim inserts. The front seats also have a sports design with body-hugging side bolsters. Large areas of the dashboard and door panels are trimmed with a soft, dimpled, leather-like material. Interior refinement is good due to the extensive use of sound insulation within the



body panels as well as the use of acoustic glazing and floor insulation material.

Specification, either standard or as an option, includes lots of safety and driving support functions such as adaptive cruise control, auto city braking, lane departure warning, blind spot monitoring, rear cross traffic alert and auto high beam lights ensuring its Euro NCAP five-stars safety rating. Such items as alloy wheels, projection halogen headlights, climate control air-con, DAB radio with six speakers, Bluetooth, touchscreen and touch-pad controller, rear view camera, cruise control and electric windows are standard fit items.

The Eclipse Cross is 4,405 mm (14.45 ft) in length with a long wheelbase of 2,670 mm (8.76 ft) and it is 1,805 mm (5.92 ft) wide giving a roomy and airy interior. Luggage space is optimised with 60:40 split rear seats with slide-and-recline adjustments which provide rear seat passengers with plenty of legroom due to the 200 mm (7.87 in) sliding range and the seat backs can be reclined through eight positions. Boot space starts at 341 litres (12.04 cu.ft) but sliding them forwards this goes up to 448 litres (15.82 cu.ft) and expands to 1,481 litres (52.30 cu.ft) with the rear seat backs folded down. For those that tow the petrol powered models have a braked towing weight of 1,600 kg (3,527 lb).

The new Mitsubishi 1.5 litre direct injection turbocharged free-revving petrol engine produces a healthy 163 hp with 250 Nm (184 lb.ft) of torque over a wide powerband ranging from 1,800 to 4,500 rpm. With the CVT eight speed 'stepped ratio' automatic gearbox and S-AWC (Super All Wheel Control) 4WD with Auto/Snow/Gravel driving modes plus Eco and Sport engine settings, top speed is 124 mph and zero to 62 mph takes 9.8 seconds, a shade faster for acceleration than with the manual gearbox. The Combined Cycle fuel economy and CO2 emission figures are not so impressive with a Combined Cycle of 40.4 mpg and CO2 of 159 g/km. My week long test driving figure was an overall 35 mpg but it crept up to 39 mpg on less demanding roads cruising at 50 to 60mph, but soon lowered again once motorway and urban driving was involved. This means the new from April 2018 First Year VED road tax cost is a high £515 before the Standard rate charge of £140 applies. Company car drivers will now pay Benefit-in-Kind tax rated as 32%. Insurance is group 21E.



The petrol powered Eclipse Cross models will be more expensive to run than some of their petrol and diesel rivals but at least the new engine has strong response when needed whilst it is smooth at low speeds. Although the CVT auto has a simulated eight speed operation, in its fully auto mode it hangs onto gears too long and like most CVTs it saps power and so the engine appears noisy during acceleration and dulls its responsiveness. Things improve if you drive using the steering column mounted paddle gear shifters, which allow more prompt gearchange points for open road driving on winding country roads. Around in-town traffic the CVT in its fully auto mode worked in a more refined way. It's a pity that if you want 4WD you have to have the CVT auto option.

The 4WD operation uses the latest version of Mitsubishi S-AWC system which controls the torque and braking force to each wheel depending upon the demands of where most traction is needed most of all. The system also includes Yaw Control for the chassis handling system and that includes measuring and adjusting steering input.

At the initial media launch and more recently for a longer time with the vehicle, the Eclipse Cross I found handled really well, better than most in this fast growing market sector and it lived up to its sports Crossover billing. The steering was really fast and sharp and the balance of handling and compliant and comfortable ride was generally excellent. The suspension errs towards the soft side but that's no bad thing and the multi-link rear system does a far better job of absorbing and controlling impacts from potholes and poor tarmac surfaces than the usual twist beam axle used by the majority of its competitors. However jolts from the worst of the potholes were transmitted into the cabin, but at least the suspension was rugged enough to cope with our worsening road surfaces so it should prove durable.

VERDICT

The vehicle has really good points to commend it; styling, size, specification, safety equipment, composed ride comfort and sure-footed handling, plus the lively new 1.5-litre petrol engine. But the downside is that if you want 4WD it comes with a CVT auto gearbox which pushes up the price and the high running and tax costs.



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For: Sporty athletic exterior styling, right size, high safety and driving support specification, comfortable ride, composed and grippy handling, roomy interior.

Against: No 4WD option with a manual gearbox, no integrated sat-nav option, high CO2 emissions, high First Year rate VED road tax and BiK company car tax costs.



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



Mitsubishi Eclipse Cross 1.5 turbo petrol First Edition 4WD auto.

Price: £29,765.

Engine/transmission: 1.5 litre, four cylinder, turbocharged direct injection petrol, 163 hp, 250 Nm (184 lb.ft) of torque from 1,800 rpm, eight speed CVT auto with 4WD.

Performance: 124 mph, 0-62mph 9.8 seconds.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 40.4 mpg, (35 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 159 g/km, new VED road tax £515/£140, BiK company car tax 32%.

Insurance Group: 21E.

Warranty: Five years/62,500 miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,405 mm (14.45 ft), W 1,805 mm (5.92 ft), H 1,685 mm (5.53 ft), wheelbase 2,670 mm (8.76 ft), boot/load space 448 to 1,481 litres (15.82 to 52.30 cu.ft), braked towing weight 1,600 kg (3,527 lb), five doors/five seats.