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Mitsubishi Galant



NO LESS THAN 21 VARIANTS MAKE UP the new Galant range, thanks to a mind-blowing mix of four-door saloon and five-door coupé (hatchback, actually) body styles, a choice of four engines, three transmissions and a wide range of optional extras.

Smooth and eager

Flagship of the fleet is the 135mph Coupé with four-wheel drive and four-wheel steering. This top model exclusively uses the new 168bhp, 2.5-litre, V6 engine which, like the 2 litre V6, has double overhead camshafts and 24 valves. It's an eager, smoothly spinning power unit for which Mitsubishi claims 0 to 60mph acceleration in under 9 seconds. It feels very refined and is quiet, too, except that beyond 4000rpm there's a hint of a not unpleasant growl.

The four-cylinder, single cam, 16-valve engines (1.8/125bhp and 2.0/135bhp) don't have quite that quiet refinement, but they cruise effortlessly and without harshness, particularly the 2 litre, which uses two balancer shafts to counteract vibrations. Expect

0 to 60mph in 10 seconds and a top speed of 125mph for the 1.8; the 2 litre is a little quicker, of course.

Silky shifts

Because the four-wheel drive Coupé uses a beefed-up manual gearbox, its gearchange doesn't have quite the light deftness of the normal five-speed 'box. But for really seamless shifting, the four-speed automatic (available on all the other models) is hard to beat. This includes overdrive and a lock-up torque converter, and incorporates "fuzzy logic". This allows the auto box to think for itself, choosing gearchange patterns best suited to particular driving conditions and ensures that it's in the right gear at the right time. Unless you deliberately concentrate on how and when it makes its gearchanging decisions, the oh-so-discreet carpet slipper shifts occur almost unnoticed. Only the swing of the tachometer needle gives the game away when you drive gently. We're very impressed.

For all its coil-sprung, multi-link sophistication, the suspension isn't especially impressive. Indeed, the actual ride is disappointingly fidgety except on

smooth surfaces and falls short of the high standards set by the Peugeot 405 and Ford's new Mondeo. That said, the Galant's roadholding and stability are impressive, thanks to passive rear wheel steering which stabilises the car near the point of tyre breakaway, and the way that the rear wheels toe-in under hard braking for additional steadiness.

On the turn

There's reassuring grip when cornering hard and fast and little body roll, but a little more feel to the light and convenient power steering wouldn't come amiss. Unlike the Galant's previous four-wheel steering, that on the 4x4 V6 Coupé is controlled by electronics. Another change is the system's ability to steer the rear wheels momentarily in the opposite direction to the front wheels at low to medium speeds to set the car up for a corner. The four-wheel steering doesn't reduce the car's turning circle, however. "That would just be a gimmick", a Mitsubishi spokesman told us. Curious!

The smoothly rounded bodies, very reminiscent of the Toyota Carina and Mazda 626, are longer, lower and wider than the previous model, and have a lower drag factor of only 0.29Cd.

At the wheel

From the comfortably shaped driving seat you get a good view of the scenery, as well as the clearly marked instruments through the height-adjustable steering wheel. Headroom isn't over-generous for tall drivers and is distinctly poor for back seat passengers in the Coupé – it's better in the saloon, though. Kneeroom is about average. The controls are excellent and there's a quality look and feel to the smoothly moulded facia and door trims. Cloth upholstery and well-fitting carpets complete the up-market ambience.

Although its safety features include front and rear crushable zones and side impact door beams, the Galant doesn't offer a driver's-side airbag, even as an option. Anti-lock brakes are available throughout the range, however, and an alarm system is standard on both V6 models. Central locking, electric windows and heated door mirrors, an electric sunroof and cruise control are either standard or available as options.

The spacious boot is well-lined and has a neat lift-up spare wheel cover under the carpet. For additional space, the 60/40 divided back seat can be

folded down. Although the backrest and squabs fold forward on the Coupé, only the backrest folds on the saloon, so leaving a stepped surface.

As with all Mitsubishi cars, this one is covered by a three-year unlimited-mileage warranty, Inter-Europ service cover and a six-year anti-corrosion perforation warranty.

VERDICT

Apart from having a fine finish and being well made, the Galant is technologically advanced and competitively priced; but, like several of its supremely competent compatriots, it's a car that impresses with its overall efficiency rather than quickening the pulse.

What is "fuzzy logic"?

On conventional electronic automatic gearboxes, the computer receiving information through various sensors, changes between first and second gears at a predetermined point. Travelling at speeds just either side of that point causes unnecessary up and down changes. Fuzzy logic has the learning ability to monitor the road and driving conditions and move that predetermined point up or down to smooth out performance without the driver having consciously to increase or decrease the car's speed.

Other examples of fuzzy logic control come into play when descending a steep hill. With conventional automatic transmissions the driver has to change down a gear or two manually and use the brakes. With fuzzy logic, the computer calculates engine load, vehicle speed, braking applied by the driver, the throttle in the closed position and then automatically changes down, giving engine braking. In order not to override the driver's intentions, the initiation of engine braking is restricted to occasions when the throttle is closed and will vary according to the gradient and how often the brakes are applied.

Fuzzy logic also applies itself to uphill driving, preventing the transmission from changing up unnecessarily, so giving a smoother, less busy drive.



BRIEF SPECIFICATION

| | 1800 | 2000 | 2000(24v) | 2500 |
|-------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Engine | | | | |
| Type | transverse 4 cyl SOHC, 16v | transverse 4 cyl SOHC, 16v | transverse V6 DOHC, 24v | transverse V6 DOHC, 24v |
| Power | 125bhp | 135bhp | 147bhp | 168bhp |
| Transmission | | | | |
| Type | 5-speed manual or 4-speed automatic | | | 5-speed manual and full-time 4WD |
| Mph per 1000rpm in top | 21.8 | 21.3 | 19.6 | 20.1 |
| Suspension | independent by coil spring/damper units, multi-links and anti-roll bars | | | |
| Steering | power assisted rack and pinion | | | plus 4WS |
| Brakes | | | | |
| Front | ventilated discs | | | |
| Rear | drums | solid discs | solid discs | ventilated discs |
| ABS | NA | optional | standard | standard |
| Dimensions | | | | |
| Length x width | 182in x 68in | | | |
| Wheelbase | 103 ³ / ₄ in | | | |
| Weight | 2689 lb | 2799 lb | 3019 lb | 3396 lb |
| Fuel | 95 octane unleaded; 64-litre (14.2-gallon) tank | | | |
| Performance | | | | |
| 0-60mph (manual) | 10.1 | 9.8 | 9.1 | 8.9 |
| (automatic) | 12.0 | 11.9 | 11.6 | NA |
| Fuel consumption | | | | |
| Urban/75mph (manual) | 29.1/39.8 | 26.6/34.9 | 25.4/33.2 | 20.3/28.8 |
| (automatic) | 28.2/38.7 | 24.8/34.0 | 24.6/32.5 | NA |

