



this class that will stay with the big Mitsubishi. Wrung out all the way, it will manage a most impressive 175 km/h top speed. A study of the overtaking figures tells the same story, but it does not do justice to the thunderous meeting of torque converter wind-up and maximum turbo boost.

With all this, the DI-D is economical, too. The move to direct injection alone is said to have slashed fuel consumption by 15 per cent. Although its tall top gearing may produce more favourable fuel consumption figures in steady-speed motoring, CAR's fuel index (consumption at 100 km/h plus 40 per cent) of 12,13 litres/100 km in fact turned out to be pessimistic. During the two-week test period, at fill-ups our averages actually ranged from 10 to 11 litres/100 km.

Unusually for an SUV, the shift lever has a Sport mode, using a Tiptronic-style gate, in addition to the usual PRND layout. Initially felt to be a gimmick, the Tip-shift was found to be particularly useful where upslopes and downslopes alternate in quick succession. On normal hilly terrain, leaving it all to the adaptive 'box works fine. It will drop down as low as third gear for engine braking when going downhill, and on uphill is free of irritating hunting in the higher ratios. To smooth out shifts, clutch action is adjusted automatically, combined with a slight backing off of the engine. Still, flooring the throttle on test occasionally second-guessed the system, causing harsh

Stylists opted for cockpit look rather than luxury-car concept. Plenty of stowage space.



fourth-third downshifts.

An improved version of Mitsubishi's Super Select allows full-time four-wheel drive, on-the-fly shifting being possible from 2wd to 4wd. With the (lockable) centre differential left open in Four-High, a viscous coupling varies the torque split front to rear from a standard 33:67 to a maximum of 50:50, depending on traction at the rear wheels. (The old model was limited to a fixed 50:50 front-to-rear split.) A rear diff lock compatible with ABS braking is standard.

Convenient and refined, the system is nevertheless complex and may not be ideal if your priority is self-sufficiency. However, given the track record and the beefy protective measures, reliability seems likely. For even further assurance out there, the air intake (now front-mounted and not through-fender as before), differential breathing intakes, air-con components and

Turbocharged and inter-cooled, the 3,2-litre direct injection engine is a development of the previous 2,8 unit.

Rivals

OUR CHOICE

	Mitsubishi Pajero 3200 DI-D GLS AT	Land Rover Discovery Td5 ES AT	Toyota Prado DT VX 8-seater AT
price	R373 400	R352 500	R379 045
cyl/capac	4/3 200	5/2 495	4/2 982
power	121/3 800	101/4 200	92/3 600
torque	373/2 000	315/1 950	295/2 400
power/mass	55,0	42,0 est	50,0 est
engine revs/km	1 211	n/a	n/a
gears/drive	10/4	10/4	8/4
0-100	12,82	17,3 est	15,7 est
max speed	175,00	152 est	158 est
fuel index	12,13	11,48 est	12,7 est
boot	544-1 784	n/a	n/a



electrical vitals are mounted well out of harm's way.

One obvious point of interest for serious off-roaders is the all-round independent suspension. Up

front, the torsion bars of the previous model have given way to coils. At the rear, the multi-link system is based on a double wishbone set-up with additional toe control and trailing arms. In contrast with the coil-over shock arrangement of the front, the rear springs and shock absorbers are separately mounted.

Independent suspension does entail a sacrifice: a greater risk of grounding compared with a solid beam axle. In all but extreme situations this is unlikely to present a problem, but it's worth bearing in mind. Forays into four-wheel-drive country revealed no major shortcomings on this score. For many, the

superior on-road performance will outweigh the potential disadvantages.

Steering is now variable-ratio rack and pinion, changed from ball and nut. Kickback is well damped, and feel and precision are surprisingly good. With its lower centre of gravity and wider track, the Pajero turns in noticeably flatter, and adopts a more neutral cornering attitude than before.

In addition to the more rigid monobody's contribution to refinement and suspension developments, it has safety benefits, of course. Crush zones around the passenger safety cell can be more precisely designed, and deformation can be more controlled. In addition to this, front and side airbags are standard, and three-point safety belts are fitted all round. Other measures include side impact bars, and a carbon fibre-reinforced plastic propshaft designed to collapse in a collision.

Braking a two-ton lump is never easy. Still, despite a slightly inconsistent showing and early fade in our 10-stop simulated emergency braking routine from 100 km/h to zero, the Pajero turned in a creditable average of 3,44 seconds. Good news is that subsequent versions should be

