

quick
spin

DAKAR DREAMER

If big is beautiful, mud-plugging is your favourite pastime and you fantasize about taking part in the Dakar Rally, look no further than the Mitsubishi Pajero Sport

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The Mitsubishi Pajero Sport is essentially based on the underpinnings of the Mitsubishi Triton pick-up truck and encompasses elements based on prevailing Mitsubishi design characteristics. The front lights and grille are reminiscent of the Dakar Rally Pajero, the rear light cluster has an Outlander touch to it and apart from that, the Pajero Sport doesn't really offer much in terms of breakthrough design and sticks to the no nonsense approach of flared wheel arches, a large glasshouse, and fine stretched metal. To some, the Pajero Sport may come across as rather plain jane, but this behemoth has the ability to turn heads as I noticed while driving it around town.

Having said that, I feel that there is a certain amount of

brand heritage associated with the 'Pajero' name. The brand name immediately throws up references and analogies with the Dakar Rally. After all, the Pajero is the most successful vehicle in the Dakar Rally till date with a total of seven wins out of ten races in its class. It's got the ultimate off-road vehicle reputation and for the blokes at Mitsubishi it only makes sense to bring this name into play with their new SUV in order to carry that aura over.

Step inside and you will be greeted by a well appointed cabin. The layout is spacious and there really aren't any belts and whistles. Having said that, the materials used are top notch and the quality of the fit and finish is commendable. The best part is nothing on the interior feels

cheap or as though Mitsubishi has cut costs. In terms of creature comforts you get a fantastic air-conditioning unit, a stereo, an on board display for vital information, a digital compass, steering mounted controls and an electronically adjustable driver's seat. Designed to seat seven adults, the Pajero Sport does usher in that level of practicality, but the last row is best reserved for children or rather short people. Incidentally, the rear two rows can be folded into a flatbed and this allows for a cavernous loading space which complements the versatile nature of the vehicle.

Powering this behemoth is a refined 2477cc common-rail direct injection DOHC diesel mill that generates 178PS @4000rpm and makes a solid 400Nm of

1. No fancy electronic 4WD for this off-roader. No sir, this comes with a proper manual 4WD transfer case.
2. The 2.5-litre common-rail direct injection D08C diesel mill of the Pajero is extremely refined and generates a maximum power of 178PS and 400Nm of torque.
3. The interiors of the new Pajero feel a lot more modern and upmarket than its predecessor.



DRIVING THROUGH DELHI IN PEAK TRAFFIC FELT LIKE A SOLID WORKOUT FOR MY ARMS! HOWEVER, FIND AN OPEN ROAD AND THE DELIGHT OF BEING BEHIND THE WHEEL OF A PAJERO COMES TO THE FORE

torque between 2000 and 2500rpm. Fitted with an intercooler and a variable geometry turbo, the Pajero is surprisingly quick for a vehicle its size and once you get the engine revs within the powerband, it feels like the engine can continue pulling till kingdom come! The turbo kicks in only around 2000rpm, at which point you get a surge in power that literally pushes you back into your seat and rockets you towards three-digit speeds faster than you would expect from such an SUV. However, the turbo lag is a curse in slow moving city traffic. City driving requires constant gear changes and you find yourself perpetually dropping out of the power rev range which makes it a bit frustrating.

When it comes to driving the Pajero around town, the experience can best be described as a mixed bag of emotions. The vehicle feels well planted on the road and doesn't lose its cool around bends. However the ride quality is a little on the stiff side. While the double wishbones with coil springs and stabiliser

bars up front and the 3-link coil spring suspension with stabiliser bars at the rear do their level best to offer a comfortable ride, it's hard to go against the laws of physics and some vibrations and harshness find their way to the passengers. While the front passengers won't mind, it's the middle and rear row passengers who will feel the brunt of this particular suspension set-up. No doubt, the large 265/65R17 tyres soak up most undulations, but the Pajero is bound to be a little rough. Secondly, the gearbox is a tad notchy and the steering, which is great to grip, is rather heavy in slow moving traffic or while undertaking parking maneuvers. Driving through Delhi in peak traffic felt like a solid workout for my arms! However, find an open road and prod the right pedal a bit and soon these facts fade away as the delight of being behind the wheel of a Pajero comes to the fore. The commanding seating, the solid road presence and no nonsense style statement are all further enhanced by the way this beast unleashes all its power in linear, almost locomotive-like fashion.

But then again, who wants to drive a Pajero around the city all day long? Especially when you have an awesome 4x4 system onboard! The Super Select 4WD system onboard the Pajero Sport has been tried and tested under the most gruelling conditions of international rallying. The shifter offers a total of four settings which include 2H, which is perfect for everyday driving in two-wheel drive mode; 4H allows you to take on slick or bad roads thanks to added traction, and the 50:50 front/rear torque split ensures that you have an enhanced level of control for high speed driving. Incidentally, you can shift from 2H to 4H on the fly up to 100km/h. To take on the boonies, 4HLc is the ideal selection as the 4x4 capability is enhanced with the centre differential being locked, and finally you have 4LLc, which essentially is the 4x4



low range with the centre differential locked that maximises low end torque and can help you get out of the worst of situations. It's a crawling mode that can best be compared to a tractor-like drive style. With all this power further enhanced by the seemingly endless off-roading capability of the Pajero Sport, I couldn't resist leaving the tarmac for some muddy mayhem!

Soaking in the undulations, traversing over rocky terrain and literally ploughing your own road, one cannot help letting out an evil laugh. The Pajero makes you feel as though you are the king of the jungle and nothing can destroy you. Mitsubishi's famed rally DNA shines through as this behemoth takes on the unknown with ease. It's a true blue SUV and Mitsubishi has ensured that it comes with the goodies right from its underpinnings which includes the new thinner, lighter steel frame that retains the strength required to go boulder bashing. I've already spoken about the super select 4x4, and adding to that is the fact that the Pajero Sport boasts a solid 215mm of ground clearance and the short front of rear overhangs translates to the vehicle possessing a 36-degree approach angle, a 23-degree ramp break over angle and a 25-degree departure angle. Coupled with large 17-inch wheels shod with a solid amount

of rubber, the Pajero Sport remains a tank no matter what you try and drive it over. It's extremely capable and frankly I felt that the amount of off-roading that I was undertaking was probably just a walk in the park for the Pajero Sport.

There is no contention in the fact that the Pajero Sport is a quality SUV. It has been engineered to perform in every aspect and it has a legendary brand name associated with it that other brands can only vie for. It does have chinks in its armour and by no means is it the perfect vehicle, but the Pajero Sport did live up to my SUV dreams. It also left me in a bit of a predicament in terms of whether I like it over its only true competition, namely the Toyota Fortuner. The Fortuner does come across as a little more refined and it definitely offers a better ride quality compared to the Pajero Sport, but honestly the fight is too close to call. If facts are your fancy, then let it be known that in the Philippines, the Pajero Sport has outsold the Fortuner! No doubt, in India the situation is a little more complex. While Toyota enjoys a solid fan following, great brand value and has a solid dealer network, Mitsubishi has remained a little niche. The rub off hasn't always been positive for the company or its brands, but if they wish to capitalise on the Pajero Sport, now would be the time to pull all stops. **MTW**



1. It may be difficult to drive in the city but take the Pajero Sport off the road and it doesn't disappoint
2. The second row has ample leg room and shoulder room to comfortably seat three.
3. The for-children-only third row folds flat to open up a lot of boot space in the back.



>>> IT DOES HAVE CHINKS IN ITS ARMOUR AND BY NO MEANS IS IT THE PERFECT VEHICLE, BUT THE PAJERO SPORT DID LIVE UP TO MY SUV DREAMS <<<



QUICK FACTS

MITSUBISHI PAJERO SPORT



POWERPLANT

Engine: 2.5L 16v DDHC common-rail DI-D turbocharged
Power: 178PS @ 4000rpm
Torque: 400Nm @ 2000-2500rpm



DRIVETRAIN

Transmission: 5-speed manual
Drive: Super Select 4WD



UNDERPINNINGS

Suspension: Front	Rear
Double wishbone with coil spring	3-link, coil spring
Brakes: Front	Rear
10-inch ventilated discs	16-inch ventilated drum
Wheel rim size: 17x7.5 JJ Alloy	
Tyres: 265/65R17	



DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase: 2800mm
Length: 4635mm
Width: 1815mm
Height: 1940mm
Kerb weight: 2065kg
Ground clearance: 215mm



Price (ex-showroom, Delhi):
₹ 24.43 lakh

FOR MORE INFO ON THE MITSUBISHI PAJERO SPORT LOG ON TO WWW.20WHEELS.COM