

Mitsubishi Colt

— Featuring 1600 GLXi —



MITSUBISHI'S LATEST-GENERATION Colt comes in three-door hatchback form only. Mechanically similar five-door hatchback versions are also available, but these are called Lancer Liftbacks.

The three versions of the Colt have 1300, 1600 and 1800cc engines, developing 74, 111 and a racy 138bhp for the sporty GTi model. They're all front-wheel drive with five-speed manual gearboxes, although an electronically controlled four-speed automatic is available for the 1600 GLXi model.

The 1600's lively 16-valve engine mounted in the compact body gives brisk performance, illustrated by its 113mph top speed and sub-9 second 30–70mph acceleration. This means it's not quite the tearaway hot-hatch it might be perceived as, but it still has plenty of sporty appeal for the keener driver.

Inside, there's a suitably low-slung driving position, taut, responsive power steering and light, easy-to-use controls. It's roomy and comfortable in the front, but despite quite generous headroom, the

back seat's a little too cosy for full-sized passengers. Luggage space is somewhat restricted, too. It's fine for the shopping, but a bit tight for more ambitious loads, although all models come with the convenience of split-folding back seats.

There's not much missing on the equipment list: power steering, central locking, electric windows and mirrors and a tilt-and-slide sunroof are all standard, although anti-lock brakes are an option only for the quick GTi model – a pity, because the brakes have an over-enthusiastic servo action in panic stops.

Fuel economy – at around 36mpg overall for the 1600 – isn't too bad, either, although this can suffer a fair bit when the performance is used to the full.

Similarly, the taut, nimble handling is obtained at some expense to ride comfort, although the suspension's firmness really only makes its presence felt around town.

On the safety side, there are useful details such as height-adjustable head restraints all round in all

Living with the Colt . . .

versions, and side impact beams in the doors, while convenience features like the headlamp beam trimmer, a cool-air control for the centre facia vents and a neat little switch panel you detach to render the radio inoperative, are appreciated on a more regular basis.

The Colt (in 1600 form, at least) comes across as a cheeky little hatchback very much in the Peugeot 205 GTi mould. It's slightly bigger, perhaps, and doesn't have quite the same raw GTi fun factor, but it's almost as appealing and offers a little extra refinement. It's also keenly priced, generously equipped and well built, and comes with Mitsubishi's generous three-year/unlimited-mileage warranty, too.

The previous Colt was worthy enough, but lacked much appeal for the keener driver. The latest version makes small but significant advances on its predecessor in many areas, most significantly for the person holding the steering wheel.

At the Wheel

Driving position

The Colt's sporty, low-slung driving position suits a wide range of sizes, with steering tilt and seat height adjusters to fine-tune comfort at the wheel. The seat height adjuster affects mainly the rear of the cushion (which allows thigh support to be tailored), but lateral location could be better and the (non-adjustable) lumbar support is somewhat lacking. Seat travel is generous, even for taller types, but the adjustment levers are fiddly to get at.

Controls and displays

Four-dial instruments – mirroring the oval theme of the door handles and front and rear lamps – are clear and easy to read; a rev counter is included, too, though not on the 1300 versions. Twist-and-turn stalks, along with prominently sited minor switchgear, prove

user-friendly, but the ultra-light gearshift is a bit "click-clacky", while low-speed vibration and a rather abrupt drive take-up tend to make the Colt jerky in stop-start traffic.

Vision

Slim pillars and generous glazing provide good all-round vision, with no major problems in store at acutely angled junctions. Four-shot washers and a variable intermittent wiper setting maintain a clear view to the front, while the rear wiper provides both continuous and intermittent settings. Electrically operated and heated door mirrors, powerful main beams and a handy facia-mounted beam-trimmer (on all models) provide strong supporting roles. A couple of minor gripes, though: the interior mirror is mounted quite low, so obscuring vision for taller drivers, and, annoyingly, the roof-mounted rear spoiler lets water drip on to the back window.

Driver satisfaction

The 1600's lively performance, quick, positive steering and nimble handling form a happy blend, combining compact hatchback charm with a fair measure of junior hot-hatch appeal for the keener driver. It doesn't, ultimately, have the raw, gutsy delight of the Peugeot 205 GTi, perhaps, but it's very much that sort of flavour – slightly less adept dynamically, but with a shade more refinement in return.

Space & Comfort

Getting in and out

The Colt's three-door-only layout inevitably compromises getting to and from the back seat, but the cushion slides well forward to make matters as easy as possible. This applies only to the passenger's seat, however, to encourage entry and exit on the safer nearside. Both front seats

incorporate a "memory" facility, so avoiding the need to reset the backrest angle each time a seat is tipped forward.

Central locking is standard on all versions, with remote control triggers down alongside the driver's seat for releasing the tailgate and fuel filler flap.

Seating and ride comfort

Passenger space is good in the front, with generous seat travel providing ample legroom for all but the very tall. Rear headroom is surprisingly good, too, but the Colt's three-door layout makes getting there a bit of a struggle and, once installed, leg-stretching space is at a bit of a premium.

Though quite taut, the Colt provides a well-controlled, reasonably unruffled ride on the open road, but passengers looking for a smooth, boulevard ride may be disappointed with the firm, rather jiggly progress around town. Road roar proved quite prominent on our Pirelli P4000-shod test car.

Heating and ventilation

A powerful fan, rear footwell ducts and easy-to-use rotary controls ease the job of keeping the occupants warm and cosy, although throughput is rather weak on the lower fan settings. Normally, we'd also complain that the facia vents turn warm too readily, but an additional control for the centre pair (providing proportional mixing of ambient air) allows a warm feet/cool face compromise to be easily achieved – a feature we'd like to see more often.

Trim and equipment

Very little is missing: central locking, electric windows and mirrors, power steering and an electric sunroof (plus sunblind) are all standard on the 1600 GLXi. If you opt not to have the sunroof on this model, you can save yourself about £400. The light grey interior looks reasonably inviting, though large expanses of

Continued on page 4

PERFORMANCE

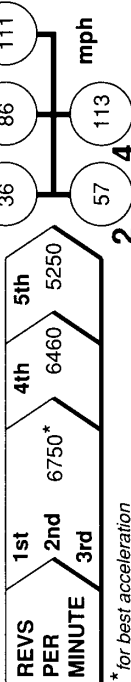
Acceleration time in seconds

STANDING START	0-30mph	0-60mph	1/4 mile
	2.9	8.6	16.7

mph	30	40	50	60	70
THROUGH THE GEARS		1.5	3.3	5.7	8.8
IN 5TH GEAR		6.0	12.4	18.8	26.3
IN 4TH GEAR		4.5	8.9	13.6	19.0

20 mph	30	40	50	60	70
5TH/4TH SPEED RANGES	12.4/9.3		12.8/9.1		
		12.4/8.9		13.9/10.1	

Maximum speeds



FUEL CONSUMPTION

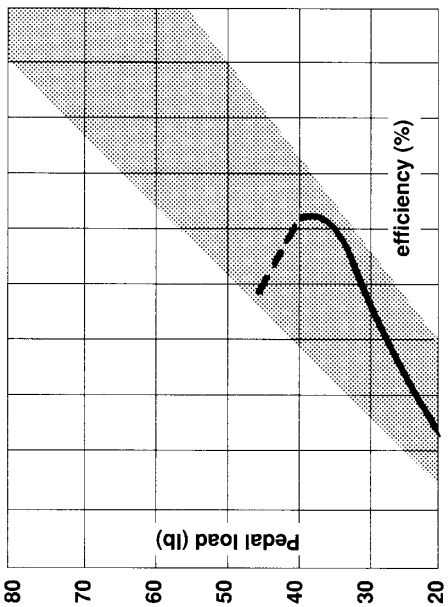
Fuel grade for tests: unleaded Premium, 95 octane

Normal range	mpg
Hard driving, heavy traffic	26 1/2
Short journeys in the suburbs	32
Motorway – 70mph cruising	35
Brisk driving, mixed roads	37 1/2
Gentle driving, rural roads	44
Typical mpg overall	36 1/2
Realistic tank range *	41 litres/330 miles

* based on fuel gauge/warning lamp and filling station experience

SAFETY

Brakes How pedal loads affect braking



Braking efficiency shown as a percentage of gravity (ie 100% = 1.0g) Ideally the braking curve should be a gentle sweep and lie within the shaded zone of this graph. If it's above, the brakes are too heavy; if it's below, they are too light – although this is more acceptable on cars with ABS. When the curve becomes broken, the wheels are skidding.

Safety check list

Steering	true 'feel' of the road?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Brakes	powerful?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	sensible effort?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	fade resistant?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Seatbelts	front – effective?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	convenient?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	rears – effective?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	convenient?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Head restraints	front – effective?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	rear – effective?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Interior	thoroughly padded?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Fuel	shielded filler?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	protected tank?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

50-0mph best stop 82 1/2% / 101ft

Handbrake only 32%

Fade test

How hard use affects braking (Ideal brakes show no change)

Pedal load needed for 75% stop (lb)

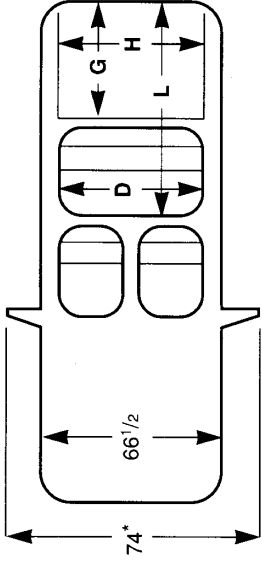
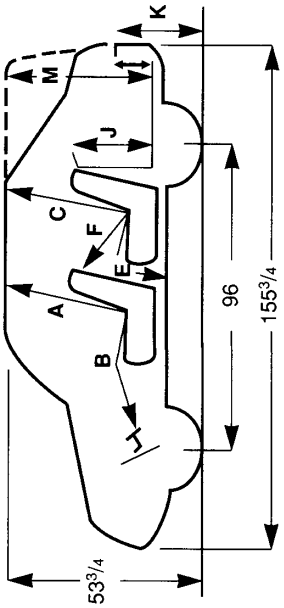
At start of test 34

After constant use 30

After severe use 32

MEASUREMENTS

Dimensions (inches)



* 66 1/2 with mirrors folded

Inside (inches)

A Front headroom (with sunroof)	36 1/4-37 1/2	Kerb weight in lb (full of fuel)	2227
B Front legroom (min-max)	34-43	G Load length	26
C Rear headroom	37	H Load floor width (min - max)	35 1/2-52 1/2
D Back seat width (between armrests)	46 1/4	J Load height	15 1/2
E Typical rear legroom	35 1/2	K Sill height (inner/outer)	9 1/4/29 1/2
F Typical rear kneeroom	26	L Load length	49
		M Load height (to tailgate hinge)	-

* "Typical" represents the mean measurement behind the driver's seat set at 39in legroom and the passenger's seat set at 41in

plastic on the doors and facia tend to spoil the effect. The cheaper 1300 loses out on electric windows and mirrors, a rev counter, a spoiler and a driver's footrest, but the 1800 GTi model comes with alloy wheels and wider tyres, disc brakes and an anti-roll bar at the back, and front foglamps.

Luggage and oddments stowage

There's ample space for shopping beneath the easy-lift tailgate, but shoehorning a full complement of holiday luggage past the prominent load sill and restricted opening under the hinged load cover proves more difficult. But all versions come with 50/50 split-folding back seats, with the neat folding arrangement forming a useful safety barrier against unruly loads. There's a good selection of oddments storage spaces up front (though none in the rear), but the ultra-slim door pockets and shallow, slippery facia-top tray are of limited use.

Money Matters

Value for money

The 1600 GLXi is well equipped and provides lively performance at a reasonably keen price, striking a happy balance between the slower, less well equipped, but nearly £2000 cheaper 1300 GLi and the racier, but nearly £2000 dearer 1800 GTi. Automatic transmission (available only with the 1600 engine) is reasonably priced, too, adding less than £600 to the price.

Restricted sales volumes combined with a generous three-year warranty and the prospect of excellent reliability, should ensure reasonably keen demand on the used-car market in the future; so we anticipate lower-than-average depreciation.

Fuel economy

The 1600's 36¹/₂mpg overall consumption doesn't seriously threaten the class leaders, although its combination of performance and economy is still respectable. Over 40mpg is available with little

effort, but if you enjoy the car's performance to the full, a figure of around the 30mpg mark isn't too difficult to obtain, either. The reliable gauge and low-level warning lamp allow a somewhat below-par 330 miles between refills – this is mainly due to about 12 litres of the tank capacity being unusable. It will take 13 litres of fuel beyond the first cut-off, but it's a painfully slow process trickling it on board – hence the below-average realistic range quoted in our tables.

In service

After an initial 600-mile dealer visit, servicing is due every 9000 miles or once a year (whichever occurs sooner). Routine level checks present few problems under the bonnet, while even the occasional bit of DIY servicing doesn't look too daunting.

Warranty and insurance

Mitsubishi's faith in its products is demonstrated by generous three-year/unlimited-mileage mechanical cover, on top of the more usual six-year anti-rust warranty. Just for good measure, three-years' pan-European breakdown and recovery assistance is also thrown in. The 1600 models attract a Group 11 insurance rating, with a Group 8 recommendation for the 1300. Not surprisingly, it's higher Group 14 for the 1800 GTi.

Safety

Accident avoidance

The Colt's compact size, taut handling and quick, positive steering provide good primary safety, but we were less impressed by our Pirelli P4000-shod test car's front end "bite" in the wet and its low-speed traction on slippery surfaces. Over-enthusiastic cornering results only in a benign widening of the line, with no nasty surprises in response to cutting the power in mid-bend.

In normal use, the disc/drum brakes deliver reassuring, nicely weighted stopping power, but

the over-enthusiastic servo can make it difficult to avoid locked wheels in really urgent stops. Anti-lock control is available on the options list, but only for the 1800 GTi model.

Injury prevention

There are no airbags on offer, and the front seatbelt shoulder mounts aren't adjustable for height. Solid, height-adjustable head restraints are fitted front and rear (on all models), however, and fire-retardant materials are used throughout the interior. Side impact beams are also provided in the doors.

Security

Convenience apart, central locking (which also reduces the risk of leaving a door unlocked) is standard on all models, while the load area cover hides the boot contents from prying eyes. However, the hatchback layout means that there's little to prevent access to any valuables here, once a thief has gained access to the passenger compartment. We liked the anti-theft device on our test car's four-speaker radio/cassette unit, though. Instead of having to remove the whole set, you simply take the small push-button switch panel with you.

Durability

Build quality

The Colt appears to be well screwed together, with neat shutlines, careful attention to detail and a generally reassuring feeling of solidity, spoilt only by a rather tinny clang on shutting the doors.

Reliability

A *Made in Japan* label is about as close as you can get to guaranteed long life and trouble-free running, with Mitsubishi's past record in this area serving only to reinforce such expectations. The peace of mind afforded by the Colt's warranty shouldn't be lightly dismissed, either.

HOW IT COMPARES

HOW IT COMPARES	Engine cap/power (cc/bhp)	Max speed (mph)	30-70mph through gears (sec)	30-70mph in 5th/4th gears (sec)	Fuel economy (mpg)	Brakes best stop (%g/lb)	Maximum legroom – front (in)	Typical leg/kneeroom – rear (in)	Steering turns/ circle (ft)	Overall length (in)
Mitsubishi Colt 1600 GLXi (3 door) (c)	1597/111	113	8.8	26.3/19.0	36½	82/37½	43	35½/26	2.8/34¼ (p)	155¾
Citroën AX 1.4 GTi (3 door)	1360/97	115	8.7	23.7/16.2	37	89/50*	41	36½/27	3.7/34	138½
Honda Civic 1.5 Vei (3 door) (c)	1493/89	110	11.5	32.3/23.0	44	102/35	44	36¾/26	3.5/33¾ (p)	160½
Mazda 323 1.6 GLXi (5 door) (c)	1598/89	110	10.9	24.7/17.1	36½	86/60	42	39¼/28½	3.2/33¼ (p)	167¾
Vauxhall Astra 1.6 Si (3 door) (c)*	1598/99	108	12.0	38.6/25.3	41½	98/50	42¼	39½/28	4.1/32½	159½
(c) with catalyser						* with ABS			(p) power assisted	
* performance/economy figures for 5-door estate version										



TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

ENGINE

Type and size front-mounted, transverse 4 in line; water-cooled. 81.0mm bore x 77.5mm stroke = 1597cc. Iron block and aluminium alloy head; 5 main bearings

Compression ratio 10.0:1

Valve gear single belt-driven overhead camshaft actuating four valves per cylinder via roller rocker arms with manual adjustment

Fuel system Mitsubishi ECI-Multi electronic multi-point fuel injection, three-way regulated catalyser with lambda sensor. 50-litre (11-gallon) tank, with low-fuel warning lamp. Fuel required: unleaded only, 95 octane minimum

Ignition system fully programmed electronic, integral with fuel injection via integrated distributor and coil

Maximum power 111bhp at 6000rpm

Maximum torque 101 lb ft at 5000rpm

TRANSMISSION

Clutch 7.9in dry plate; diaphragm-spring; hydraulically operated. Pedal load/travel: 23 lb/5¼in

Gearbox 5-speed manual (all synchromesh) and reverse. Ratios: first 3.08, second 1.95, third 1.28, fourth 0.94,

fifth 0.78 and reverse 3.08:1

Electronically controlled, dual-mode four-speed automatic transmission available on 1600 GLXi

Final drive 4.02:1, to front wheels

Mph per 1000rpm 21.3 in top, 17.6 in 4th

Rpm at 70mph 3290 in top gear

CHASSIS

Suspension front: independent by MacPherson damper/struts, coil springs, lower wishbones and an anti-roll bar. Rear: independent by coil spring/damper struts, with multi-link trailing arms and transverse links. Dampers: telescopic all round

Steering power-assisted rack and pinion (standard on 1600 GLXi, optional on 1300 GLi) with 2.8 turns between full locks. Turning circles average 34¼ft between kerbs, with 48ft circle for one turn of the wheel

Wheels 5J x 13 steel, with 175/70R13 82H tyres (Pirelli P4000 on test car)

Brakes 7.3in ventilated discs front, 8.0in drums rear, with vacuum servo. Anti-lock control not available on 1300 GLi and 1600 GLXi, optional on 1800 GTi

