

Summary: THE HONDA CR-V has reasons to feel threatened. For years it had no competition so to speak and even today remains quite simply the best car Honda has on offer in India. But now the Mitsubishi Outlander has arrived and it has enough appeal enough substance and enough spunk to split the soft-roader segment wide open.....

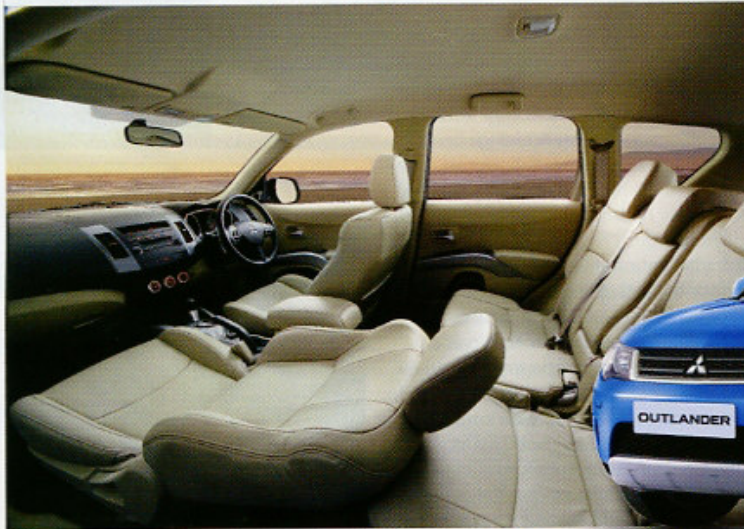
LIFESTYLE



ON THE GO

Getting OUTLANDISH

Read about the Ninety Mile Beach, which is actually not 90 miles long, and a car that will give the CR-V a run for its money. **BY RISHAD SAAM MEHTA**



SUVs, are very basic though they do feature three point seat belts and a really fantastic space-saving feature—they fold flat into the floor of the loading bay. Clever too is the tailgate that splits for easy loading and unloading and the load area is a mere foot-and-a-half off ground level. Luggage capacity is a jaw-dropping 882 litres (with third-row seats folded), and the space goes up to 1,690 litres if the second row seats are dropped as well.

Tuned specifically for good on-road behaviour, this Mitsubishi is reputed to be the best handling soft-roader. The claim is totally believable, as Mitsubishi's full fledged off-roaders are no slouches in this respect. The four-wheel drive system, known as All Wheel Control, essentially functions



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The Outlander, Mitsubishi's new soft-roader, is an effort from the company to get into 'top gear' and they have put in all its renowned off-road and rally car genius into a single package. The Outlander looks quite good at first glance. The front windscreen, in fact, is so steeply raked that it looks very car-like, especially when viewed together with the bonnet. Huge wheel arches, a roof that arches down towards the rear and blacked-out pillars are some other features that stand out. The

deep-set headlights give the nose a touch of aggression.

The vertical almost van-like rear windscreen is flush mounted with the car's C-pillar and overlaps the rear pillar. The LED-studded chromed taillights are the truly radical part, however, especially when mounted right up against the smoked glass. Inside the cabin, the instrumentation is pure functionality that doles out speed and rpm. The steering itself is beautifully crafted its relatively slender three-spoke design now possible due to advancements in airbag technology. The design of the central console echoes that of the new Toyota Land Cruiser, with vents placed on either side of the audio system and strips of brushed aluminium running alongside.

The rear seats split 60:40, in case you need to carry a lot of luggage but the third row of seats, like most

as a front wheel drive but it doesn't lose energy and fuel efficiency and keeps the four-wheel drive system partially engaged, in case it encounters any slip. This means a bit of driver interaction—turning the dial to the 4WD auto mode—is required to engage four-wheel drive, but now the system responds much faster to any slip requirements, preventing you from getting bogged down before the car engages the rear wheels for additional traction.

Also apart from a full complement of airbags, the other lovely feature of the Outlander is the 'custom' sound system designed in collaboration with Rockford Fosgate, a leading American car audio brand. And it is a biggie that boasts four six-inch speakers, twin dome tweeters, a 10-inch sub-woofer and a 650 watt amp sound as standard. A real winner, this one! ●