

2008 MITSUBISHI LANCER GTS



The all-new Lancer is larger in every dimension except length, where it has lost 1.5 centimetres. It rides on a brand-new platform shared with the new Outlander, which provides a 56% increase in torsional rigidity and 50% more bending rigidity. For the time being, the front-drive Lancer is offered as a sedan with a choice of three trim levels: DE, ES and GTS.

In the works for the 2009 model-year are a Ralliart version, a station wagon, and a larger, 2.4-litre engine for the GTS. The very sporty Evolution with 291 horsepower is available for the first time in Canada.

Interior and trunk

The front seats are very comfortable, even without adjustable lumbar support. Head and leg room are adequate for most, and the driving position is very good.

Getting into the back is easier than getting out, because of a lack of space between the B-pillar and the benchseat cushion. The rear seat is comfortable for two adults. Leg room is good but head room is a bit tight for tall people. The seatback folds in a 60/40 split (unfortunately, a folding seatback is not available in DE trim).

Trunk capacity is good. It has a flat floor and an average-sized opening.

Convenience and safety features

The cabin is very well finished in good-quality materials. However, we heard some dashboard rattles in our test vehicle during the warm-up period. Sound isolation needs improving insofar as road and wind noise are concerned; we often had the impression that a window was open. There are several small storage spaces, but total storage capacity is unimpressive.

Gauges and controls are well laid out. The audio-system controls on the steering wheel are small, and the radio controls on the centre stack are a tad thin. The glove compartment and some of the controls are not illuminated at night. The heating system is rather slow. The turn signals are inaudible.

In terms of safety, the Lancer comes with seven airbags (two front, two side, two head curtain airbags and one for the driver's knees), four-wheel disc brakes with ABS, front seats designed to reduce the risk of whiplash, and five head restraints. Unfortunately, the rear restraints do not adjust high enough for tall individuals. Visibility is good in all directions except on a three-quarter-rear angle, because of the wide C-pillars. The large spoiler restricts the view to the rear. With or without the spoiler, it is difficult to judge distances when backing up. The top of the dash reflects off the windshield almost constantly. The headlights lack range in the low-beam position.

In U.S. government front and side crash tests, the Lancer earned five out of five stars for front-passenger protection and four stars for rear-passenger protection. Tests of Lancers built before May 11, 2007 revealed a weakness at a rear door. Mitsubishi is fixing the problem free of charge to make those vehicles as safe as the ones built after that date. The vehicle earned four stars for rollover resistance. The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety awarded the Lancer a Good rating, its highest, for driver protection in a frontal offset impact and for all-occupant protection in a side impact.

Engine and transmission

Along with the new Lancer comes a new four-cylinder engine, a 2.0L arising from a collaboration between Mitsubishi, Hyundai and DaimlerChrysler. It develops 152 horsepower (32 more than the former engine) and 146 pound-feet of torque (16 lb-ft more). Acceleration and pickup are adequate. The engine is well adapted to the car but a little more muscle in the 2009 GTS will be more than welcome. Right now, this four cylinder is a bit noisy in heavy acceleration. It meets strict Tier2/Bin5 emissions control standards.

The continuously variable transmission always functions very smoothly. The manual mode is quick, but the paddles that allow you to "shift" among the six gears should be mounted on the steering wheel rather than on the steering column, for easier access when turning the wheel.

On the road

The GTS's four-wheel independent suspension usually provides a comfortable ride, but on many irregularities, the reaction is firm almost to the point of harshness. It should be noted that with its 18-inch, 45-series tires, the GTS is more about sporty handling than a soft ride. Road holding is very good, especially when the road surface is not too bumpy.

The power steering is well weighted, stable, precise and relatively quick. It provides a bit of road sensation, and its turning circle is short. The brakes resist well to fade, but emergency stops are long. However, braking is competent in normal driving.

Inspection

In our inspection at a CAA-Quebec technical inspection centre, we saw that the Lancer is structurally sturdy and well protected against corrosion. However, the airbag module, under the driver's seat, is exposed to water, calcium, etc. We've seen better places for the installation of this important module. The overhead camshafts are chain driven.

Conclusion

Greatly improved in every way, the new Lancer should have no problems attracting new customers. This well-rounded sedan is also fun to drive, no matter what the version. With the advent of the sporty Evo this year, and a station wagon and a more powerful engine next year, the Lancer family will become even more interesting.

PROS: comfortable front seats, efficient CVT transmission, good standard equipment, road compartment, solid structure, very good warranty

CONS: sound isolation, dash-top reflections in windshield, electronic module under driver's seat, rear exit, several controls not illuminated, no folding rear seatback in base version

2008 MITSUBISHI LANCER

Engine: 16-valve, 2.0-litre 4-cylinder

Horsepower: 152 hp at 6,000 rpm

Torque: 146 lb-ft at 4,250 rpm

Transmission: 5-speed manual; continuously variable transmission (CVT)

Suspension: fully independent

Brakes: disc/disc

Wheelbase: 263.5 cm

Length: 457 cm

Width: 176 cm

Height: 149 cm

Weight: 1,325 to 1,410 kg

Tires: P205/60R16; P215/45R18

Maximum towing capacity: forbidden

Airbags: dual front, plus two side, two curtain airbags and one for driver's knees

Fuel consumption with CVT:

Natural Resources Canada rating:

City: 9.6 L/100 km (29 mpg)
Test result: 10 L/100 km (28 mpg)

Highway: 6.9 L/100 km (41 mpg)
Test temperature: - 11°C to 5°C

Fuel tank capacity: 59 litres

Fuel requirement: regular grade gasoline

Acceleration:

0–100 km/h: 9.3 seconds

60–100 km/h: 5.8 seconds

Competition: Chevrolet Cobalt, Dodge Caliber, Ford Focus, Honda Civic, Hyundai Elantra, Jeep Compass, Kia Spectra, Mazda3, Nissan Sentra, Pontiac G5, Saturn Astra, Subaru Impreza, Toyota Corolla, Volkswagen Golf City, Rabbit, Jetta City and Jetta

Warranty:

- Full basic coverage: 5 years/100,000 km
- Powertrain: 10 years/160,000 km
- Surface corrosion: 5 years/100,000 km
- Perforation damage: 5 years/unlimited km
- Emissions control system: 5 years/100,000 km (full coverage); 8 years/130,000 km (catalytic converter, electronic control module, onboard diagnostic system)

Factory replacement parts:

- Rear bumper: \$1,574
- Front brake disc: \$136
- Brake pads: \$104
- Muffler: \$403
- Front fender: \$398

Average insurance premium (Quebec City, replacement cost endorsement, claim-free insurance record, male or female driver 30 to 40 years old): \$922 to \$1,086

Price according to trim level:

- DE: \$16,598
- ES: \$19,698
- SE: \$20,698
- GTS: \$21,698

Main options:

- CVT: \$1,100
- ABS and air conditioning package: \$1,800 (DE)
- Sun and sound package: \$2,000 (GTS)

Price as tested: \$23,698

Freight and preparation: \$1,495

Dealers: Quebec: 20 Canada: 65

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