



Mitsubishi i-MiEV

Electric for the people

Review | It all started in 1966. In that year the largest Japanese power company requested Mitsubishi to build an electric car. The outcome was the "Minica EV" and the technology behind that concept has continued to develop till today. Batteries got more powerful, lighter and quicker to charge. Now, in 2010, the electric car isn't just aimed at governments and idealists anymore. The Mitsubishi i-MiEV is meant to be the first electric car for the people.

The Mitsubishi i-MiEV was tested in Paris and that location was chosen for a reason. Paris is an example of a city with such heavy traffic and so much pollution that the car should be adapted to the city and not the other way around.

Electric

The most important feature of the Mitsubishi i-MiEV is that it is powered by electricity, so it has zero emissions. The i-MiEV is not a hybrid car and doesn't have a range extender, this is a pure electric car.

Charging can be done in two ways: using the wall socket at home or by means of a quick charger. Charging at home takes seven hours; a special quick charger does it in one hour. How environmentally friendly the i-MiEV is, depends on the supplier of the electricity. When using green power, the i-MiEV really does contribute to a cleaner environment. When the electricity has been generated by burning coal, the problem has merely been shifted.

After charging, the i-MiEV can travel 150 kilometres

(about 100 miles). This is just a theoretical value, which can only be realized in ideal circumstances. Things like driving style and use of the climate control can seriously affect the range. Using the heater or air conditioning can decrease the range by 46%!



Driving

Driving an electric car doesn't require any special skills, however it does differ from driving a traditional car. The absence of any engine noise isn't the only difference.

An internal combustion engine delivers more power at a higher engine speed; the power increases gradually. An electric motor delivers its full torque from the outset. This is why the i-MiEV accelerates with incredible ease! If desired, the i-MiEV is the first to get off the line at the traffic lights every time. Because an electric motor is so powerful, a gearbox isn't necessary, which makes driving even easier.

City traffic

The lively character really comes in handy in heavy traffic. Thanks to the instant reaction on the throttle, the driver automatically becomes more assertive.

Then another thing becomes clear: the i-MiEV isn't just small to make it more efficient. The i-MiEV is meant as a city car and in city traffic a compact car is ideal.



The i-MiEV is very narrow and may therefore look a bit silly. In city traffic the small size is a real advantage, because this Mitsubishi can navigate through gaps in traffic that others deem impossible. Even a double-parked lorry or half a parking spot is no problem for this Mitsubishi!



Handling

Handling is affected by the huge weight of the batteries. Also, the engine is mounted in the rear and drives the rear wheels. When cornering at high speeds this may cause the back to step out ("oversteer").

Because Mitsubishi assumes that the average driver isn't capable of correcting this, the front-wheels are fitted with very narrow tyres. In this way the rear-wheels always have more grip and in extreme situations the car will slide over the front wheels ("understeer"). However, the front wheels are so tiny that the car loses grip too easily and that gives little faith in the car. To make matters worse the suspension is too sloppy, making the car tilt over in every corner.



When used as a city car or second car in the household, the i-MiEV is indeed the first electric car for the people. The electric Mitsubishi offers similar space, safety and luxury as a traditional compact car. Performance and comfort are even better! The most important thing is that emissions are zero, so the i-MiEV actively contributes to a cleaner environment right now. ■

Trio

Mitsubishi has developed the zero emission vehicle in cooperation with Citroën and Peugeot. All three brands sell their own version of the vehicle. The "Citroën C-Zero", "Peugeot iOn" and "Mitsubishi i-MiEV" all look the same and have the same technical specifications.

The most important difference is that the French manufacturers feature a simplified "gear lever". Also, the Peugeot can be executed in frivolous colours for private buyers and more sober colours for companies.

A spokesperson of Mitsubishi stated that the brand chooses not to advertise and instead uses that budget to lower the price of the i-MiEV. Also, the Mitsubishi is the first of the trio to actually be in the showrooms and delivered to the customer.

Conclusion

The electric car has come a long way over the last few decades. Whether or not the Mitsubishi i-MiEV is really ready for the general public depends on the use of the car. In most cases the range is too limited to make it to work every day. Perhaps the car does manage to drive to the office, but without a charging point the i-MiEV won't be able to make it home at the end of the day. On top of that handling is no more than adequate. Although the purchasing price is high, this is compensated by the low running costs.



Specifications

Mitsubishi i-MiEV EV

Size and weight



Length x width x height	347 x 145 x 161 cm
Wheelbase	255 cm
Kerb weight	1.120 kg
Trailer	unknown
Trailer - braked	unknown
Battery	unknown
Luggage space	227/860 l
Tyre size	145/65R15

Engine and performance



Max power	64 PS @ 3500 rpm
Max torque	180 Nm @ 1 rpm
Drive	rear wheels
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	15.9 secs
Top speed	130 km/h
Average mileage	unknown
Mileage urban	unknown
Mileage extra urban	unknown
Range	km (NEDC)
CO2 emissions	0 gr. / km

Price

Price	Â£ 33,699
Price base model	Â£ 33,699