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Latest Suzuki Swift Road Test

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Third generation Suzuki Swift now on sale in the U.K.

David Miles (Miles Better News Agency) gives his opinion...

The third generation Suzuki Swift range of five door 'supermini' sized five door hatchbacks went on sale in the UK in June this year at prices ranging from £10,999 to £15,849. The first generation Swift models in three and five door layouts went on sale in 2005 and have sold 5.4 million units globally, one million in Europe and 127,000 in the UK.

Suzuki UK has a sales target of 12,500 units for 2018 out of a total of 70,000 European



market sales. The new Swift will continue to compete for sales in the B-segment, also known as 'supermini' against the likes of the high selling Ford Fiesta, Vauxhall Corsa, VW Polo, Skoda Fabia, Honda Jazz, Peugeot 208, Nissan Micra and Toyota Yaris - but there are plenty of other competitors as well.

Available as only a five door model, due to the lack of demand for less practical three door 'supermini' sector hatchbacks, the new Swift UK range is available in SZ3, SZ-T and SZ5 grades. There is the choice of three petrol engines depending on the specification grade chosen.

Going through the technically complicated five model range in price order; the least expensive model is the 1.2 Dualjet 90 hp four cylinder normally aspirated unit with SZ3 spec. Next in line is the 1.0 litre Boosterjet 111 hp, three cylinder turbocharged unit with SZ-T specification. Next is the same 1.0 litre engine but with SHVS (Smart Hybrid Vehicle by Suzuki) technology with the top SZ5 spec. Moving onwards and upwards in price is the 1.2 litre Dualjet 90 hp unit but with SHVS hybrid boost and with auto 4×4 Allgrip traction. All these models have five speed manual gearboxes Top of the price chart is the 1.0 Boosterjet SZ5 without the SHVS hybrid boost but with a six-speed automatic gearbox.

Fuel economy varies between the engine configurations from 56.5 mpg up to 65.7 mpg, with CO2 emissions ranging from 97 to 114 g/km, and the insurance Group is 9E.



Suzuki UK says the likely most popular model for UK buyers will be the 1.0 Boosterjet SZ-T variant which costs £12,999. This version has a Combined Cycle figure of 61.4 mpg with CO2 emissions of 104 g/km. The target age range for customer sales is 21 to 55 year olds. The order take-up for the Allgrip model is expected to be between five and 10% - depending on the weather conditions at the time of purchase.

Standard SZ3 specification includes, ABS braking, Electronic Stability Programme, ISOfix child seat anchorage points, tyre repair kit, 15-inch steel wheels, remote central locking, electric front windows and door mirrors, on-board computer, 60/40 split folding rear seat backs, auto headlights, daytime running lights, six airbags, air conditioning, DAB radio,



privacy glass, daytime running lights and Bluetooth connectivity. The SZ-T level additions include smartphone link display, rear view camera, front fog lights and 16-inch alloy wheels. The SZ5 level additions include auto air-con, sat-nav, 4.2-inch LED touchscreen, LED headlights, rear electric windows, dual sensor brake support and the Advanced Forward Detection System with camera, laser and radar sensors for such functions as pedestrian protection, autonomous emergency braking, lane departure warning and adaptive cruise control.

The new Swift is the third Suzuki model after the new Baleno and Ignis model ranges to use a new generation lightweight platform with the lowest spec version being more than 100 kg (220 lb) lighter overall than its predecessor. At 3,840 mm (12.60 ft) in length the new five door Swift is 10 mm (almost half an inch) shorter than the outgoing model but the wheelbase is 20 mm (nearly an inch) longer at 2,450 mm (8.04 ft), creating more interior space including 20% more luggage capacity at 265 litres (9.36 cu.ft) which is 54 litres (1.91 cu.ft) more. The new car is also 15 mm (0.59 in) lower at 1,495 mm (4.90 ft) and 40 mm (1.57 in) wider at 1,735 mm (5.69 ft), with wider front and rear tracks for improved stability.

Despite its new platform and changed dimensions the new Swift doesn't look dissimilar to the previous version and perhaps not as interesting from the front view due to the dull design front grille which reminds me of Japanese domestic market spec cars in this class. This generation Swift is actually built in Japan, not Hungary as before. The new Swift retains its short front and rear overhangs with a wheel at each corner stance and bolder flared wheelarches. It actually looks more impressive from the rear than it does the front. There is a slightly rising waistline and a slightly lowering roofline towards the rear which gives it an athletic profile, not a shopping box on wheels - but the lowering roofline does reduce rear seat headroom for six-footers.

Its compact size makes it easy to park, its lightweight construction gives it improved agility and the longer wheelbase and wider front and rear tracks improves stability fore to aft and side to side during cornering. My only negative issue is the very high rear sill which items have to be lifted over and down into the deep boot. Fido will need a lift unless it's a long



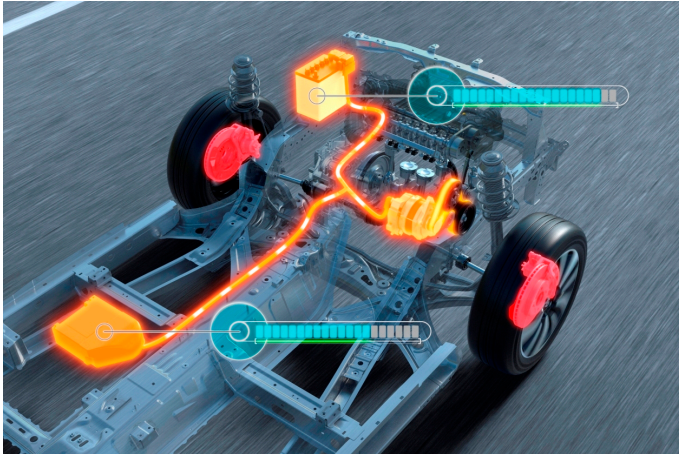
legged species.

Inside it is much the same as most new Suzukis, lots of specification, good visibility, well laid out controls but still significant amounts of hard plastic trim, definitely - no wow factor, but functional and durable at best.

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My test drive Swift model was the best selling 1.0 Boosterjet with the SHVS mild hybrid system. It had the top of the range SZ5 specification level and this model costs £14,499. The Boosterjet three cylinder direct injection turbocharged petrol engine produces 111 hp with a healthy 170 Nm (125 lb.ft) of torque from 2,000 rpm. With the SZ5 specification this unit gains the SHVS mild hybrid system which is a combined starter motor which is also a generator. This Integrated Start Generator (ISG) has a power output of 2.3 kW and 50 Nm (37 lb.ft) of torque. It assists the engine as an electric motor during vehicle starting off and acceleration and also generates electricity through regenerative braking, and stores power in a compact 12V lithium-ion battery positioned under the front passenger seat.





The importance of the SHVS mild hybrid addition to this engine shouldn't be underestimated. It smooths out the peaky power delivery these modern three-cylinder turbo petrol engines sometimes deliver. It provides a more linear and progressive power delivery and eliminates turbo lag as the electric motor, even with just 50 Nm (37 lb.ft) of torque, provides a boost for engine response from low revs before the turbo cuts in. The extra torque also allows higher gears to be used at low engine speeds in commuter traffic saving fuel.

It all adds up to an impressive and responsive little engine. Top speed is 121 mph and zero to 62 mph takes 10.6 seconds but it felt and appeared faster than that. Despite only having a five speed manual gearbox the ratios are well spaced to capitalise on the torque available.

Real-life fuel economy during my week long test covering town, rural and motorway use returned 48.6 mpg, good but well below the official Combined Cycle figure of 65.7 mpg. The CO2 emissions are low helped by the mild hybrid system with a figure of 97 g/km. This means VED road tax costs £120 First Year rate and then £140 for the Standard rate from year two onwards. Company car drivers will pay a low 18% Benefit-in-Kind tax rate. Insurance is Group 9E and warranty is three years/60,000 miles.

The handling is agile, the steering is well weighted and precise and makes light work of in-town or open road driving. The ride comfort is more compliant on main roads than it is over



poorer potholed and broken in-town road surfaces.

VERDICT

Overall the new Swift is well priced, well equipped and should appeal to its many loyal customers. However I'm not sure it will appeal to conquest customers, it just lacks the kerb appeal, vibrant interiors and ride refinement of the new Nissan Micra, Toyota Yaris, Ford Fiesta and VW Polo

For: Impressive Boosterjet engine with its SHVS hybrid system, attractive price, low running costs, high specification, agile handling.

Against: Bland front end styling, restricted headroom and legroom in the rear, high boot sill, dull and hard plastic interior trim.



Milestones and Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

Suzuki Swift 1.0 SZ5, SHVS Boosterjet, five door supermini.

Price: £14,499.

Engine/transmission: 1.0 litre, three cylinder, direct injection turbo petrol, 111 hp, 170 Nm (125 lb.ft) from 2,000 rpm, five speed manual, front wheel drive.

Performance: 121 mph, 0-62mph 10.6 seconds.



Fuel consumption: Combined cycle 65.7 mpg, (48.6 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 97g/km, VED road tax £120/£140, BiK company car tax 18%.

Insurance Group: 9E.

Warranty: Three years/60,000 miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 3,840 mm (12.60 ft), W 1,735 mm (5.69 ft), H 1,495 mm (4.90 ft), boot/load space 265 to 579 litres (9.36 to 20.45 cu.ft), five doors/four to five seats.