

Latest Suzuki Vitara Full Hybrid – First Impressions

Published: March 7, 2022

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Online version: <https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/latest-suzuki-vitara-full-hybrid-first-impressions/>



The new Suzuki Vitara Full Hybrid...

...tried and tested by Robin Roberts (and Miles Better News Agency).

Seven years from launch and two years after it added a mild hybrid model to the Vitara range, Suzuki has not skimped on kitting out their new-age Full Hybrid Vitara SUV.

The wait has been worth it as it represents much better value than its closest eight rivals. Prices are from £23,499 for the SZ-T Hybrid, the SZ5 Hybrid from £25,499 and this version has the option of the £1,800 ALLGRIP 4×4 traction system.



Every model gets braking assistance, blind spot monitor with rear cross traffic alert, traffic sign recognition, adaptive cruise, seven airbags, Smartphone connectivity, remote key, navigation and climate control.

On top of this standard SZ-T trim you can select SZ5 with large sunroof, polished alloys, suede upholstery, parking sensors both ends and ALLGRIP four-wheel-drive as an option and this comes with hill descent control for added safety along with the intelligent traction control.

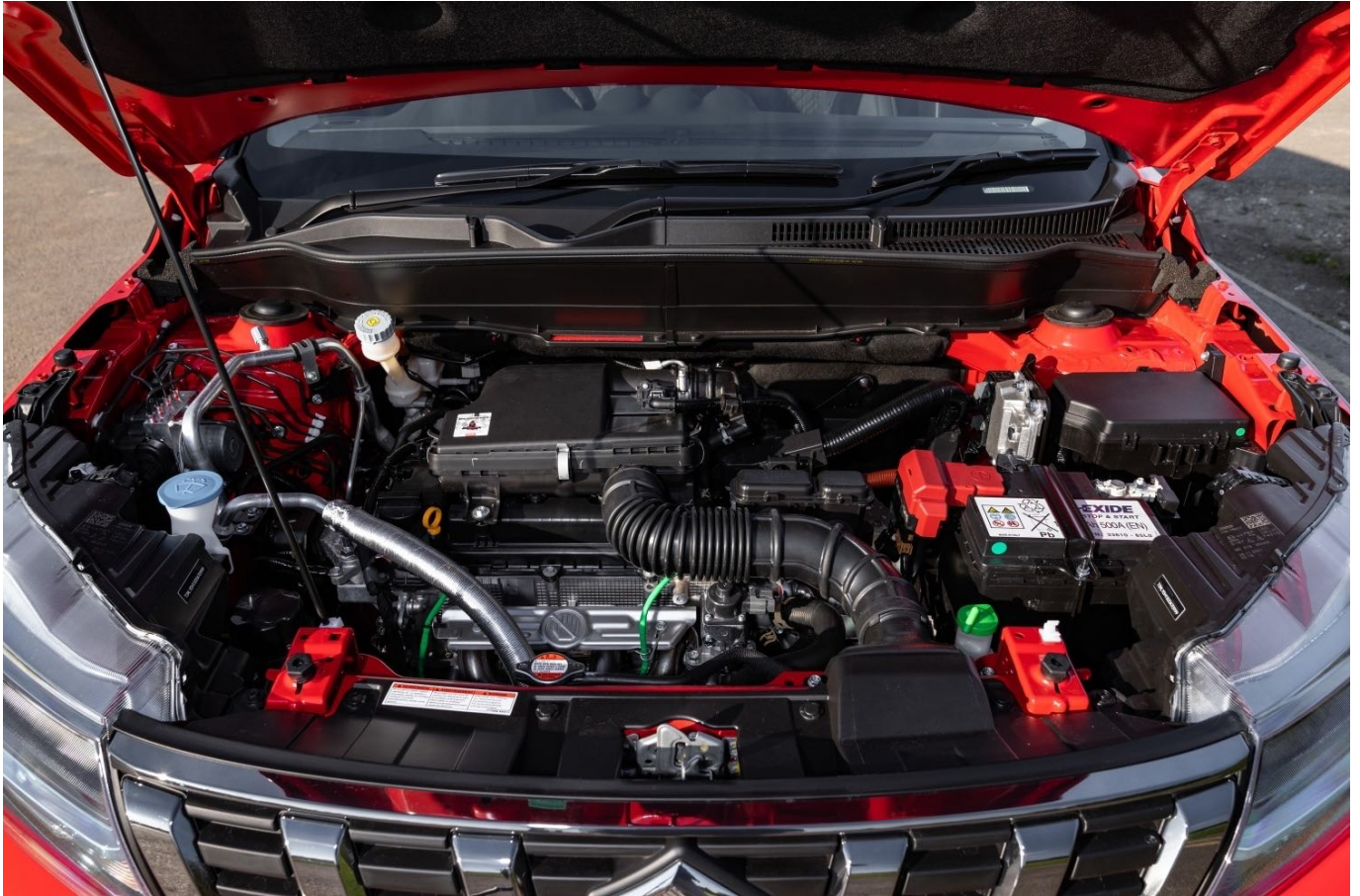
The new full hybrid 140-volt electric motor with dedicated EV mode will be sold alongside the 48V mild hybrids, priced from £21,749, until their stocks exhaust in a few weeks.

The new powertrain uses Suzuki's latest Auto Gear Shift which is an automated manual transmission similar to the unit used by Toyota and now mated to a specially developed version of Suzuki's 1.5 litre normally aspirated petrol engine which generates 121 g/km of CO₂. The driver can select normal or eco modes which determine how much electrical assistance is provided to boost performance or fuel saving, alongside a regeneration system



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The new AGS transmission effectively permits automatic changes with manual selection also possible through paddles behind the steering wheel.



The Vitara appeared in 2015, upgraded four years later and in 2020 we saw the arrival of the 48V hybrid technology which is now being superseded with the 140V full hybrid system, but it's not a plug-in hybrid.

Much of the interior specification and look is a carry-over from the previous generation with some subtle changes.

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On the first drive test this week through some testing and varied roads in Snowdonia and short spells on dual carriageways and main roads in Cheshire, we tested both the best selling SZ5 and SZ5 ALLGRIP versions.



The ALLGRIP version costs £1,800 more than the 2WD models and is worth the extra if you regularly run over wintry roads or in muddy off-road conditions.

They always start off in normal mode but you can select Sport and the amount of electrical urge increases, which is ideal for towing and overtaking. We thought the normal mode was disappointing when faced with sudden gradients and the Sport setting transformed the Vitara and sharpened up the handling on twisting roads.

Our spell in the 2WD model which is expected to be the better seller was probably more rewarding for day-to-day driving and also a financially better proposition. Gearchanges felt quicker than but just as smooth as the ALLGRIP, and there was little to choose in the road holding at normal speed.





Both models gave a good ride over mostly smooth roads but would jar on bad bits of tarmac although body roll was well contained.

Braking was safe and sure and steering produced good feedback.

Major controls were well placed, particularly the column paddles but I would have liked greater contrast in markings for the speedometer and tachometer gauges, as well as possibly a digital speed readout on the multi-function display directly in front of the driver.

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For a family car, the nominal boot-space is below average.





VERDICT

Fully-equipped family SUV, now with full 'self-charging' hybrid powertrain, and representing good value for your money.

For: Well-equipped, smooth Hybrid powertrain, comfortable, fairly economical, good visibility.

Against: Modest performance, small boot, noisy ride and busy engine note, lots of dark plastic trim, average warranty.



Fast Facts



Suzuki Vitara Full Hybrid SZ5

Price: £28,034

Mechanical: 115 PS, 4 cyl, 1462cc petrol/ 140-volt electric motor, 6 speed Auto, front wheel drive

Max Speed: 111 mph

0- 62 mph: 12.7 seconds

Combined MPG: 42.5

Insurance Group: 18A

C02 emissions: 121 g/km

Bik rating: 28%, £170FY, £145SR. (Note: AllGRIP versions Bik, 30%).

Warranty: 3 years/ 60,000 miles

Size: L 4.18 m (13.71 ft), W 1.78 m (5.84 ft), H 1.61 m (5.28 ft)

Boot space: 289 to 642 litres (10.21 to 22.67 cu.ft)

Kerb weight: 1,268 kg (2,795 lb)