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Suzuki Ignis Road Test

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Author: Keith Ward

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Keith Ward gives his assessment of Suzuki's latest city car...

ON sale in the UK from the start of this year (2017), the little all-new Suzuki Ignis city car can pack an awful lot for relatively little money into its light and compact SUV frame.

Prices start at £10,249. On top of a generally generous kit level, the top SZ5 version we drove, at well under £15,000, came with the Japanese firm's ALLGRIP 4WD system, kicking in automatically, given slippery conditions, via an extra differential.

Also the company's SHVS "mild" or smart hybrid unit. Working alongside the car's conventional 1.2 litre petrol engine (using a standard starter motor from cold), SHVS employs a belt-driven ISG starter generator in all other instances to assist the engine during vehicle take-off and acceleration, ensure smooth re-starts and recapture energy during



braking.

In the hybrid circuit is a high-performance lithium-ion battery under the front passenger seat as an energy store. All this claims the kudos for achieving in this version of the Ignis a low CO2 figure of 106 g/km (even more important in the stricter tax regime from April 1st this year) and an official combined “lab” mpg of 65.7 (in reality during a week on the road we recorded a still-creditable 52.8).

There are other clever aspects to the Ignis. Outwardly small and some might say stunted in its pug-like looks, it hides a surprisingly roomy interior. The two broad, equally divided rear seats in upper versions offer generous legroom, or can be individually slid forward 17 cm (nearly 7 inches) to increase capacity of the otherwise short, if deep and wide, boot, which loses 20 per cent of its storage to the 4WD diff housed below the floor. Otherwise the seat backs can be tipped forward, if not neatly, to carry larger items.



The horizontal two-tone dash cleverly helps give an overall impression of breadth and roominess within the cabin. The high driving position gives good vision going forward, but the wide rear pillars can obstruct your view at oblique junctions. The multi-function, seven-inch Pioneer touch-screen (“can be used when wearing gloves”) sometimes required multi-prodding (even with bare fingers) before responding.

Our top SZ5 came with auto air-con, sat-nav, rear view camera, links to smartphone apps and cruise control. Stereo cameras mounted each side of the rear view mirror detect likelihood of collisions ahead and trigger warnings if you start wandering within your lane or depart from it, as through tiredness.

On the road the 90 PS four cylinder 1.2 petrol engine, standard throughout the six-strong



Ignis range, could sound gruff from cold but quickly settled and progress was smooth through the five-speed manual box. Performance is not startling (0-62 in 11.1 seconds) but felt compatible with the car. It pluckily tackled a circuit of the Lake District. On motorways in top fifth at 70 mph it was pulling an easy 3,000 rpm, well below the red line.

Steering was nicely direct and a tight turning circle makes the Ignis nimble in town. A surprising omission was reach adjustment for the steering wheel. The ride could be fidgety on its 16-inch wheels on rougher surfaces, but the overall comfortable suspension even passed a vicious “dip” test on my regular driving route.

Suzuki are on a high here with UK sales at a record 38,000 plus last year and targeted at 41,500 in 2017, with the new Swift joining Celerio, Vitara, Baleno and S-Cross in achieving “a better spread” of sales, says Ed Norman, the company’s UK Product Planning Manager. Three years ago the Alto hogged half the business.

VERDICT

Ignis has ignited buyer interest, bagging 3,300 UK buyers in its first three months, two thirds of them new to Suzuki, grins Ed Norman, and with an age profile 40 to 50. Not my bracket, but all in all, in its week with me I liked the car more and more.



Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

Suzuki Ignis SHVS 1.2 SZ5 Allgrip Compact Crossover; five doors; four seats.

Size: Length 3,700 mm (12.14 ft); width 1,690 mm (5.54 ft); height 1,595 mm (5.23 ft); kerb weight 920 kg (2,028 lb).

Boot: Length 500 - 1,020 mm (1.64 - 3.35 ft); width 1,020 mm (3.35 ft); vol 204 - 1,086 litres (7.20 - 38.35 cu.ft).

Engine: Petrol; four cyl; 1,242 cc; five speed; stop-start; 4WD; smart hybrid. 90 PS @



6,000 rpm; max torque 88 lb ft (119 Nm) @ 4,400 rpm.

Pace: 103 mph; 0-62 mph in 11.1 secs□.

Fuel consumption: On test 52.8 mpg; official combined 65.7 mpg; tank 30 litres□ (6.60 Imperial gallons).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 106 g/km; top Euro 6 standard; VED £140 p.a.

Tyres: 175/60; R16 Bridgestone.

Service: Every 12 months/12,500 miles.

PRICE: £14,249; as tested, with options £14,899□.

Rivals: Fiat Panda 4×4; Peugeot 2008; VW up; Honda Jazz; Hyundai i10; Fiat 500; Hyundai i10; Ford Ka+