



Suzuki Swift Sport and Vitara – Brief Impressions of current models

Published: September 9, 2021

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Online version: <https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/suzuki-swift-sport-and-vitara-brief-impressions-of-current-models/>

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Kim Henson briefly test drives the latest, 48 volt self-charging hybrid system versions of the Swift Sport and Vitara...

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With self-charging hybrid technology, incorporating an upgraded new lithium-ion battery, applied as standard across the Suzuki line-up, the latest models all employ a compact, lightweight belt-driven 'Integrated Starter Generator', or ISG, that works as a generator and a starter motor. This assists the petrol engine and harnesses electricity through regenerative braking.

This system works seamlessly with no intervention, no plugging-in is required, and there's no range anxiety involved! Hooray.

I recently had the opportunity to take brief test runs in the latest versions of the Swift Sport and the Vitara, both of which are now equipped with a 48 volt hybrid system; this is the first time that the Swift Sport and Vitara have had hybrid assistance. The new arrangement optimises torque delivery and emissions performance.

For clarification, Suzuki's Swift 1.2 litre models and Ignis are fitted with a 12 volt hybrid system (which they have had from introduction), whereas the current Swift Sport, all Vitaras and all S-Cross models run with a 48 volt set-up.



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SWIFT SPORT



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Over the last few years I have been lucky enough to drive all the previous generations of Swift Sport, each one better than its predecessor and, compared with contemporary competitors, each one ticking the boxes on my list in terms of performance (for a 'warm' sporting hatchback), emissions, fuel consumption, practicality, comfort, high quality finish, value for money and dependability (borne out by real life use with many happy owners).

With mild styling updates the latest generation Swift Sport that I sampled looked and felt very familiar, and, as with previous versions, it is very fully equipped as standard.



During the few miles I was behind its neat, sporty steering wheel I enjoyed its excellent performance, aided throughout by strong pulling power (torque) right across the rev range and from low engine speeds, its predictable, safe-feeling handling, good ride comfort and overall refinement.



Sporty in nature it is, but it will also accommodate five people in reasonable comfort (the front seats are especially accommodating), and has a good-sized boot for the size of vehicle.



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I should also mention the fact that the Swift Sport retains a 'conventional' parking brake ('handbrake') lever (rather than being fitted with a button-controlled electrically operated system), visible in my 'cockpit' photograph. For me personally, this is a major plus point; I far prefer a manually operated handbrake lever, and this one was positive in action and worked well.

VERDICT

Fun to drive, but practical transport too. Yes please I would like one.

Note: You can save £2,000... If you are interested in a Swift Sport (or indeed other Swift



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models), talk to your Suzuki dealer as, currently, normal list prices have been lowered by £2,000 (check the Suzuki website or your dealer for up to date offer information).



Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. In Brief:

Swift Sport

Price: £22,070 (plus £165 for dual-tone metallic paint)



BUT customer offer of £2,000 off the list price applies at the time of writing (September 2021), so base price reduced to £20,070.

Drivetrain: 1.4 litre Boosterjet with 48 volt hybrid system



Power: 129 PS @ 5,500 rpm

Torque: 235 Nm (173 lb.ft) @2,000 rpm

Performance:

0 - 62 mph: 9.1 seconds



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Top speed: 130 mph

Fuel consumption (WLTP Combined figure): 50.4 mpg

CO2 Emissions: 125 g/km

Road Tax (after first year): £145

VITARA 1.4



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Again, previous successive versions of the Vitara have all impressed me, in each case as a compact SUV offering versatility in family motoring, and long-term reliability has been a strongpoint, as it has always been across the Suzuki line-up.

As with the Swift Sport, the latest Vitara I sampled - a two wheel drive model, but 4x4 versions are offered too of course - was equipped with Suzuki's 1.4 litre Boosterjet engine, allied to a 48 volt hybrid system, at the heart of which is the light in weight, clever and straightforward belt-driven Integrated Starter Generator (ISG) unit.

I enjoyed the easy-to-drive nature of this Vitara, with positive handling, a compliant ride quality and a willing motor delivering strong performance. In fact the drivetrain delivers the

same power output and maximum torque as the Swift Sport, but of course the Vitara is bigger and heavier than the Swift, so ultimately a little slower, but it's still a sprightly mover.



It's very happy and quiet cruising at all speeds, and, while I didn't take the car anywhere near its limits during my test run (mainly on narrow country roads), I found the handling/roadholding characteristics to be positive and reassuring. I also liked the 'weighting' and feel of the steering, and the excellent brakes.



The overall fuel consumption will not be far behind that of the Swift Sport; official WLTP 'Combined' figures are 50.4 mpg for the Swift Sport; 48.3 mpg for this Vitara.

There is plenty of head and leg room for front and rear passengers, apart from a third person travelling in the centre of the rear seat, whose leg room is restricted by the protrusion of the rear end of the centre console assembly. That's a shame as interior space is otherwise very good, and all the seats are comfortable.



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There's a large, sensibly-shaped and flat-floored load area, with useful 'cubby holes' on either side to accommodate small items. The 'false' floor of the boot lifts to provide a shallow but wide and long compartment for storing further items too. The base of this compartment lifts for access to the tyre 'inflation kit' (a spare wheel does not come as standard) and there is additional space around this for carrying other 'bits and pieces'.



As with the Swift Sport, I was delighted to find that the Vitara is equipped with a traditional, manually-operated handbrake lever (visible in my 'cockpit' photograph), which I far prefer to the electrically-operated push-button switch type of parking brake. Well done Suzuki.



VERDICT

A competent, well-built, good to drive and thoroughly likeable family vehicle.

Note: You can save £3,000... If you are interested in a Vitara, talk to your Suzuki dealer as, currently, normal list prices have been lowered by £3,000 (check the Suzuki website or your dealer for up to date offer information).



Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. In Brief:



Vitara 1.4 Boosterjet SZ5, two wheel drive

Price: £27,049 (plus £500 for optional Galactic Grey paint); total £27.549.

BUT customer offer of £3,000 off the list price applies at the time of writing (September 2021); please check Suzuki's website and/or your local dealer for current offers.

Drivetrain: 1.4 litre Boosterjet with 48 volt hybrid system



Power: 129 PS @ 5,500 rpm



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Torque: 235 Nm (173 lb.ft) @2,000 rpm

Performance:

0 - 62 mph: 10.2 seconds

Top speed: 118 mph

Fuel consumption (WLTP Combined figure): 48.3 mpg

CO2 Emissions: 132 g/km

Road Tax (after first year): £205