



Suzuki SX4 S-Cross (2017 Model Year) Road Test

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David Miles (Miles Better News Agency) assesses the 2017 model year Suzuki SX4 S-Cross – “More spec, more muscle and more expensive”, he says...



Suzuki's original S-Cross was launched in 2013 as a mid-sized Crossover, but looked more of a five door hatchback or estate than an SUV. It is those muscular looking SUVs of all sizes that have boosted sales by bringing even more competitor models to the sector.

The face-lifted S-Cross was introduced in October 2016 with more muscular styling to give the appearance of an SUV thanks in part to a ride height raised by 15 mm (just over half an inch). Other improvements included a retuned suspension system, better handling, and a higher specification, with an improved interior quality and revised engines.

The 2017 range when launched in October 2016 started at a competitive £14,999 but with a price increase for some versions from January 2017, the base model now costs £15,999. But you can offset that increase as Suzuki is offering a £1,000 contribution when their finance agreement is taken. The most costly model is priced at a hefty £24,999, an increase of £650 over the launch price three months ago.



The S-Cross sits between Suzuki's own new Vitara, now their best selling range with over 11,250 UK sales last year, and the market leader in the SUV/Crossover sector - the Nissan Qashqai, with over 60,000 UK annual sales.

Suzuki has an annual plan for around 4,000 S-Cross UK sales and 80% of those will be to retail customers. The expected single best-selling version will be the 1.0 litre turbocharged petrol Boosterjet SZ-T automatic, priced at £20,849 or with their ALLGRIP 4×4 traction system it costs £21,299, but that version only has a manual gearbox.

The full revised engine line-up sees the old 1.6 litre petrol engine ditched in favour of two turbocharged petrol units used in other Suzuki models. The 1.6 litre turbodiesel remains in



the line-up. All engines have the option of ALLGRIP 4WD system and the two petrol engines have either five or six speed manual or six speed auto gearboxes - but the diesel comes with a six speed manual only.



The 1.0 litre three cylinder direct injection turbocharged Boosterjet petrol engine delivers 111 hp with 170 Nm (125 lb.ft) of torque from 2,000rpm. It offers 9% more torque than the outgoing 1.6 litre non-turbo petrol unit, with 11% lower CO2 emissions and 10% better Combined Cycle fuel economy.

The new 1.4 litre, four-cylinder Boosterjet petrol engine has a healthy power output of 140 hp and an impressive 220 Nm (162 lb.ft) of torque delivered from only 1,500 rpm, which is 41% more than the outgoing 1.6 petrol unit - and it is 17% more powerful and 4% more economical than the old 1.6 petrol motor.



The 1.6 litre four-cylinder turbodiesel unit has received minor changes and with 2WD has CO2 emissions of just 106 g/km, two grams lower than before. This unit offers 120 hp but scores better with 320 Nm (236 lb.ft) of torque from 1,750 rpm. It has the best Combined Cycle fuel economy figure in the whole range of 68.8 mpg in 2WD configuration, so high mileage business users will still go for this version as it also provides a low-ish Benefit-in-Kind tax rate of 21%

When it comes to the specification choices there are SZ4, SZ-T and SZ5 levels, with all three equipped with seven airbags, ESP stability control and DAB radio as standard. The mid-range SZ-T is expected to be the most popular.

So in addition to power, torque and transmission choices what spec do we get for our money? The base SZ4 spec level with its 1.0 litre petrol engine has 16-inch alloy wheels, air-con, cruise control, Bluetooth, electric windows, powered adjustable and heated door mirrors, height and reach adjustable steering column and black front, side and rear under body trim.

Move up to the SZ-T spec level, which is available with the 1.0 petrol and 1.6 turbodiesel engines and the spec additions include 17-inch alloy wheels, silver roof rails, silver side and rear under body trim, sat-nav, front and rear parking sensors with reversing camera, dual zone air-con, auto lights and wipers, keyless entry, upgraded stereo system, LED projector headlights and daytime running lights, folding door mirrors and two position reclining rear seats.

The top spec SZ5 is available with the 1.4 petrol or 1.6 diesel engines and the equipment level gains are leather upholstery, heated front seats, panoramic sunroof, radar brake support, adaptive cruise control and an extra front centre speaker.

The increased spec level improves the appeal of the latest S-Cross and the new infotainment system was easy to use. There is more use made of soft-touch trim materials for the dashboard and door panels but some of the plastics low down in the cabin felt a bit flimsy.



The doors felt a bit lightweight and didn't close with a reassuring clunk but that said it all seemed well put together and no doubt will have Suzuki's renowned longevity and durability.



As for changes to the exterior body and styling, all versions gain that extra 15 mm (just over half an inch) of ground clearance and to make the vehicle look more of an SUV it has a bolder design front end with an overly large garish front chromed grille which didn't appeal to me. The S-Cross might be built in Hungary but the 'blinged-up' grille design looks as though it comes from Suzuki's partnership with the Indian Maruti company. The raised clamshell bonnet certainly adds front end muscle to the vehicle. At the rear there seemed no obvious changes but the wide tailgate gives easy access to the 430 litres (15.18 cu.ft) of boot space. With the rear seat backs folded flat this space goes up to 875 litres (30.90 cu.ft). For those who need to tow the braked trailer weight is 1,200 kg (2,645 lb).



My test version was the 1.4 Boosterjet petrol SZ5 model with ALLGRIP and the six speed auto gearbox. Priced at £24,199 when I drove it, but now £24,849 or £23,849 if the Suzuki finance offer is taken. As that price it won't be the most popular model, but for some it would be the most desirable as it offers the best performance with an auto transmission and all-weather 4WD grip control. New S-Cross PCP finance offers for 2017 start from £189 a month over four years with a 10k mileage limit. The test model costs £305 per month over four years.

The 1.4-litre Boosterjet petrol engine is the strong point of the S-Cross with 140 hp of power. But more importantly it has a wide spread of torque of 220 Nm (162 lb.ft) available from just 1,500 through to 4,000 rpm. This means it is very responsive from standstill right up through the acceleration range to high cruising speeds. Coupled with the slick-changing six-speed auto gearbox response is immediate - it was a joy to drive. Not just because of its



punchy acceleration but it was really smooth at low in-town speeds and relaxed at 70 mph cruising speeds. Top speed is 124 mph and zero to 62 mph takes 10.2 seconds. Officially in the Combined Cycle this unit with the standard ALLGRIP function will return 49.5 mpg with CO2 emissions of 128 g/km. On test over the Christmas and New Year holiday period, where freezing fog and icy road conditions prevailed, the best real-life figure I saw was 44.5 mpg during a motorway journey but then the cold morning starts and with more local stop/start driving it brought that figure down to 39.8 mpg overall.

The ALLGRIP system is standard-fit with this engine. It was really useful during my test driving period due to the severe weather. I know it will not be of use all the time but it is comforting to have, even in Summer when a trip onto a field car park can turn into a quagmire by the end of the day due to our unpredictable weather, or parking on a sandy beach. ALLGRIP has four modes; Auto prioritises fuel economy and is in use most of the time with front wheel drive, but automatically switches to 4WD when wheelspin is detected. Sport mode makes maximum use of 4WD, optimising engine torque output and cornering response. Snow mode is for low friction surfaces and Lock mode uses the limited slip differential to brake any slipping wheel and transfer the torque to the wheels with most grip, to extricate the vehicle from snow, mud or sand. Unless you live and drive only in a town with little Winter driving this system is a must. Why would you have any Crossover or SUV without it?

When the roads were dry the latest S-Cross felt agile with sharp steering and the suspension now gives a more compliant ride after its retuning.



VERDICT

Overall the 2017 model year S-Cross range has been improved, apart from price. The highlights are the new petrol engines, plus all models get more equipment and the styling has been 'beefed up' to apply more of an SUV image.

For: Better styling (apart from the grille), more spec, more comfort, nice to drive in all weathers, impressively responsive engine.



Against: Latest prices are starting to look expensive, some cheap-feel interior trim, naff grille design.



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

2017 Suzuki SX4 S-Cross 1.4 Boosterjet SZ5 ALLGRIP automatic.
Price: £24, 8499.

Engine/transmission: 1.4 litre, direct injection turbocharged petrol 140 hp, 220 Nm (162 lb.ft) of torque from just 1,500 rpm, six speed auto with ALLGRIP 4WD.



Performance:

0-62mph: 10.2 seconds.

Top speed: 124 mph.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 49.5 mpg (39.8 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 128 g/km, VED £0/£110, BIK company car tax 22%.

Insurance Group: 21A.

Warranty: Three years/60,000 miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,300 mm (14.11 ft), W 1,785 mm (5.86 ft), H 1,585 mm (5.20 ft), boot/load space 430 to 875 litres (15.18 to 30.90 cu.ft), braked towing weight 1,200 kg (2,645 lb), five doors/five seats.

Note:

If you are interested in reading Kim's assessment of this SX4 S-Cross model (published before the latest price increases mentioned by David), please [CLICK HERE](#).