



Suzuki Celerio First Impressions

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Kim Henson takes to the wheel of Suzuki's diminutive but internally spacious city car; he's impressed by the whole package, particularly the Celerio's three cylinder Dualjet engine... but is he (at last) lost for words?





SUZUKI'S SUCCESS STORY

Before describing the Celerio, it is worth briefly mentioning the success story of its manufacturer.

In recent times Suzuki has been doing increasingly well in terms of global sales, and the UK is no exception, with 2014 being a record year for the company (with a 1.51 per cent market share, incorporating growth of 13 per cent between 2013 and 2014), and 2015 is set to show excellent figures too.

Importantly, in terms of British customer satisfaction, the company is rated within the top three car manufacturers.

In terms of worldwide sales the firm is within the top 10 motor companies, and in 2014 sold three million cars plus 2.1 million motorcycles.

Last year in Japan it ranked as No. 3 in vehicle sales, with a 14 per cent market share, and in India enjoyed a 44 per cent share of sales.

The company has ambitious plans for future models too...

THE CELERIO

Suzuki's products (motorcycles and cars) have always been well-respected, and over the years the firm has excelled especially at producing small, fuel-efficient models that are reliable, easy to own and inexpensive to run.

Enter the Celerio. This new city car, which is built in Thailand, went on sale in February 2015, with new versions being added to the line-up during the spring/summer.



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By design the newcomer was intended to provide buyers with a 'best in class' spacious interior within compact exterior dimensions, also class-leading luggage space (254 litres), plus excellent performance, particularly in terms of minimising fuel consumption and emissions.

All versions are powered by a three cylinder 1.0 litre petrol engine. From launch Suzuki's



proven (in its Alto and Splash models), and improved K10B power unit was employed, and from April 2015 the new and technically fascinating K10C Dualjet engine was available; more of this anon.

Standard equipment on all versions, including the entry-level SZ2 model (introduced in the summer of 2015 and priced at £6,999) includes five door, five seater bodywork (almost all competitors of comparable size are four seaters), six airbags (and a wealth of other built-in safety features), electronic stability control, a tyre pressure monitoring system, and a DAB radio/CD tuner audio system.

For an additional £1,000 buyers can opt for the SZ3, which provides them with further features including aluminium alloy road wheels, air conditioning, electrically-activated front door windows, also USB and Bluetooth connectivity. Where the Dualjet engine is specified, the package incorporates a 'Hill-hold' control to aid hill starts.

The SZ4, priced at £8,999, incorporates electrically-operated door mirrors, plus electric operation for the rear windows (as well as the fronts), a chromed front grille, front fog lamps, four speakers for the sound system and polished aluminium alloy wheels.

It should be mentioned that strong residual values are predicted for used Celerios in three years' time, meaning that buyers of new examples now should lose less of their initial outlay compared with some cars, should they decide to sell.

ENGINEUITY

Versions powered by the K10B engine offer excellent fuel consumption, with the official 'Combined' figure being 65.7 miles per gallon (and with CO2 emissions coming in below the 'magical' 100 grams per kilometre road tax threshold, at just 99 grams per kilometre).

From personal experience I know that Suzukis driven in real life motoring can come very close to the stated 'Combined' figures, so in mixed use it should be possible to achieve around 60 mpg with these models.



So all that is very positive, but Suzuki has gone one better...

Available on SZ3 and SZ4 versions, for an additional outlay of £500, is the firm's new K10C 'Dualjet' power unit. This incorporates a variety of technical advances, resulting in significantly improved efficiency in terms of petrol consumption and emissions.



This engine features a higher compression ratio (12.0:1 compared with the K10B's 11.0:1) and provides greater thermal efficiency. It also incorporates friction reduction technology, including roller-rocker type valve lifters (with variable valve timing too).



To avoid uncontrolled combustion (known as 'knock' or 'detonation'), a cooled Exhaust Gas Recirculation (EGR) system is employed, together with piston cooling jets.

In addition, combustion efficiency has been improved by the use of bowl-shaped piston crowns, to achieve greater air turbulence within the cylinders, in conjunction with a dual injection system, known as 'Dualjet'.

Under this set-up the fuel injectors are positioned extremely close to the inlet valves (with revised inlet ports and combustion chambers too), providing finer fuel mixture atomisation and thus improving transfer into the engine's cylinders.

In addition, on Celerios fitted with the Dualjet engine, Suzuki's Engine Auto Stop Start System (EASS) is also installed, halting the engine when the car stops (in traffic, etc.).

The combined effect of all these measures is a slightly higher torque output (for the record, an additional 3 Nm or 2.2 lb.ft.), and, crucially, an official 'Combined' fuel consumption figure of 78.4 miles per gallon, with a CO2 emissions rating of just 84 grams per kilometre. This makes Dualjet powered Celerios the 'cleanest' car available for an 'On The Road' price under £10,000 (and in fact the SZ3 with this motor comes in at around £1,500 less than this, at £8,499).

TRANSMISSIONS

The Celerio's five speed manual gearbox has been considerably upgraded compared with previous units, including improvements to the synchromesh and gearchange quality, plus the adoption of lower friction bearings. Torque loss is said to have been reduced by 40 per cent, and thus efficiency has been improved.

An option on SZ4 versions is Suzuki's recently-developed 'Auto Gear Shift' (AGS) transmission. Costing an additional £800 over the price of an equivalent Celerio with a manual gearbox, this provides the driver with effortless driving in traffic, and the system returns petrol consumption and emissions figures identical to those of the manual models.



The fuel-efficient Auto Gear Shift transmission was developed in conjunction with Marelli, and incorporates an electro-hydraulic unit that automatically activates the gearchange mechanism. The gear actuator and gearchange controller are integrated together, the assembly being termed an 'Intelligent Shift Control Actuator'.

This transmission features a manual mode (for a more 'direct' feel when required), plus a 'creep' function (giving about 5 mph and handy in heavy traffic, also when parking, with no need to operate the accelerator pedal).

ON THE ROAD





I took to the wheel of a Celerio in SZ3 form, the test car being powered by the Dualjet engine in conjunction with the five speed manual transmission.

Over a long road route in the west country, which took in fast main roads, winding country lanes and some steep gradients both up and down, as well as some urban driving, I found the car highly enjoyable to drive.

The Dualjet motor was smooth-running and performed eagerly, pulling particularly strongly from 2,000 rpm and upwards. Okay, of course it's not a sports car (it was never intended to be one!) but still provides willing acceleration, from rest and on the move, and is good to drive both in traffic and on the open road, when required.

This diminutive Suzuki felt safe and secure through the twisty bits, at the same time being fun to drive. It was easy to manoeuvre at slow speeds too, with a tight turning circle and nicely-weighted power-assisted steering.

My co-driver and I were impressed by the ride quality as well as the car's handling.

The smart-finished interior certainly felt unusually spacious for a small car, with generous head and leg room throughout; also, as stated earlier in this report, the Celerio is a full five



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seater.

It also features a roomy and readily-accessible boot, with a tailgate that opens from bumper level so that loading and unloading is not a chore.





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Fuel consumption? After several hours of mixed driving on public roads in real-world conditions, the Celerio's on-board trip computer was showing that my driving partner and I had between us achieved an overall consumption figure of 73.6 miles per gallon, which is not far short of the official 'Combined' figure of 78.4 mpg.



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Just brilliant. I've driven many compact modern cars and the Celerio is my favourite so far. It's externally small but internally spacious, comfortable, especially frugal on fuel, feels well-built and is great to drive. In addition, whichever version you choose represents excellent value for money.



As a motoring writer, I always say what I truly feel about the cars I assess. However, in case you are wondering, I have to say that in this instance, and despite trying hard, I really can't think of any bad points worth noting. Good Grief. Whatever next?

WHEELS-ALIVE TECH. SPEC. IN BRIEF

Suzuki Celerio 1.0 SZ3 Dualjet

Engine: 998cc three cylinder, chain-driven twin overhead camshaft, 12 valve

Power: 68 bhp at 6,000 rpm

Torque: 93 Nm (68.6 lb.ft) @ 3,500 rpm

Transmission: Five speed manual gearbox; front wheel drive

0-62 mph: 13.0 sec

Top speed: 96 mph

Fuel consumption, 'Official' figures:

('Urban'): 68.9 mpg

('Extra Urban'): 83.0 mpg

('Combined'): 78.4 mpg

CO2 emissions: 84 g/km



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'On the road' price (not including options): £8,499

Options on test car: Pearl metallic paintwork, £415, making total vehicle price £8,914.