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Suzuki Ignis Road Test

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Suzuki's new Ignis city car...
David Miles (Miles Better News Agency) gives his assessment...

the all-new, high-stance Suzuki Ignis is a bit of both as some versions are front wheel drive and another version offers ALLGRIP 4×4 traction.

All major manufacturers seem to offer small, medium and large SUVs/crossovers but the Ignis takes the trend even further.



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With its five door city car size of 3.7 m (12.14 ft) length and 1.7 m (5.58 ft) width, but also with its high stance plus extra ground clearance and its chunky design with flared wheelarches, robust bumpers, short clamshell bonnet and blunt nose, it looks more SUV - right in fashion and with appealing prices starting from just £9,999.



Suzuki GB expect to sell around 6,000 of them in the UK this year, and given the competition in a fast-growing market sector that is no small ambition. All versions are powered by a 1.2 litre, Dualjet four cylinder 89 bhp petrol engine and most have 2WD through SZ3 and the best selling SZ-T specification levels. At the top of the range are the SZ5 2WD and also the 4WD ALLGRIP version with on demand 4×4 traction plus Hill Descent Control for venturing off-road, and this version costs £13,999. There is an £800 auto transmission option for 2WD SZ-T and SZ5 versions. The engine in the SZ5 model also has SHVS (Smart Hybrid Vehicle by Suzuki). This mild hybrid system utilises a starter generator motor, which as its name suggests acts as a generator and starter motor, and which assists with power during acceleration as well as generating electricity during



braking, recharging the additional lithium-ion battery and the conventional 12-volt battery.

In harmony with the attractive low purchase price, running costs will be relatively low. Depending on the variant chosen the Combined Cycle official fuel economy ranges from 65.7 to 60.1 mpg and CO2 emissions range from 97 to 106 g/km. This means all versions are at the time of writing free of VED road tax for the First Year rate and either zero cost (for the 2WD SZ5 with SHVS hybrid support) or just £20 for the Year Two onwards rate. Insurance rates are Group 15E to 18E.

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It might be small in stature and skimpy on price but the Ignis doesn't come up short with specification. The starter SZ3 variant's spec includes electric front windows, electric door mirrors, on-board computer, remote central locking, manual air-con, DAB digital radio, Bluetooth, daytime running lights, 15-inch steel wheels and 60/40 split folding rear seat backs. The most popular SZ-T spec additions include 16-inch alloy wheels, sat-nav, rear view camera, clever sliding/reclining 50/50 split rear seats, roof rails and hill hold control. The SZ5 additions include automatic city braking, lane departure warning, engine stop/start, cruise control with speed limiter, leather covered steering wheel, two front sound system tweeters and a black front grille with chrome accent.

The lower spec versions only have a Euro NCAP three star safety rating but the top spec model gets five stars. However Suzuki will offer a safety pack which will improve the safety rating of the SZ3 and SZ-T variants.

The elevated seating position provides good visibility and its compact length plus light steering make it an easy car to drive in its city car environment. Generally the controls are well laid out although some are partially hidden such as on the ALLGRIP variant I tried where the 4WD select and descent control switches were low down under the centre console.

The plastic trim highlights its budget price, durable no doubt but a bit low-rent. Entry into



the rear seats is good and the variable sliding seat on my test car would be useful for family use. There is a 204 litre (7.20 cu.ft) boot on the ALLGRIP versions but more at 260 to 267 litres (9.18 to 9.43 cu.ft) on 2WD and lesser spec versions. With the rear seat backs folded this space grows to a maximum 1,096 or 1,100 litres (38.70 or 38.84 cu.ft), depending on the model. Access to the boot is easy through the wide tailgate but there is a high rear sill to lift luggage over.



I tested the top spec SZ5 variant with ALLGRIP 4WD and on the open road the steering weight was inconsistent and slow to react. Being tall there was considerable body roll during cornering and the short wheelbase made the ride 'choppy' over country roads. On main roads the ride was better but impacts from potholes unsettled the car. With its low weight it did feel agile with reasonable grip but there was no getting away from the fact that this is a city car designed for urban and local motoring rather than long journeys.



On motorways there was significant buffeting from larger and faster traffic passing me, and my test car felt much happier cruising at 60 mph rather than the legal maximum speed. That also provided better fuel economy. Cruising at 60 mph and the figure was 55.7 mpg over a long journey. Increasing cruising speed to 70 mph and the figure dropped to 49.1 mpg. With some town and local country driving miles thrown in the overall average for my week of Ignis driving was still a commendable 53.2 mpg for a petrol powered car.

Top speed for the £13,999 Suzuki Ignis SZ5 ALLGRIP model is 106 mph and zero to 62 mph takes a modest 11.4 seconds. The motor produces 120 Nm (88.5 lb.ft) of torque at 4,400rpm, but despite that relatively high engine speed figure, the response and flexibility from the engine was impressive thanks to sensible gear ratios. Driving at the usual commuting 30 to 50 mph speeds, or covering winding country lanes, didn't require lots of down-changing of gears to keep the car moving along effortlessly. Only driving at higher motorway speeds was harder work.

VERDICT

Although the Ignis, with its cheeky modern crossover styling and five doors, should appeal to those needing a compact but in-vogue crossover styled car for the school run, it will also appeal to those young-at-heart empty nesters for their day-to-day motoring needs. It should also become an option for rural dwellers, especially those who come from the farming community and need a useful cost-effective second car for family duties.

The ALLGRIP control auto 4WD system, which includes selectable Hill Descent Control and Grip control, will also be useful for many buyers. This, combined with the vehicle's light weight and this version's higher ground clearance, gives it an impressive ability to cross muddy fields or cope with farm tracks. It is not, of course, a full-blooded mud-plugger but away from tarmac roads in the rough it is impressive for its size.

For: Well priced, high specification, distinctive, thoroughly modern crossover exterior styling, roomy for a city car, easy to drive in urban conditions, capable off-road with ALLGRIP option, low fuel costs.



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Against: Choppy ride, happier at 60 mph cruising than 70 mph, some cornering body roll, slow steering response, hard-feel plastic interior trim.



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

Suzuki Ignis SZ5 1.2 Dualjet SHVS with ALLGRIP four wheel drive.

Price: £13,999.

Engine/transmission: 1.2 litre, four cylinder, multi-point petrol engine with mild hybrid support, five speed manual gearbox with all wheel drive, 89 bhp, 120 Nm/88.5 lb ft of



torque at 4,400 rpm.

Performance: 106 mph, 0-62 mph 11.4 seconds.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 60.1 mpg (53.2 mpg overall on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 106 g/km, VED road tax before 1st April 2017 £0/£20, but after 1st April, £140 each year, BIK company car tax 18% then 20% from April onwards. Insurance Group: 18E.

Warranty: Three years/62,000-miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 3,700 mm (12.14 ft), W 1,690 mm (5.54 ft), H 1,595 mm (5.23 ft), boot/load space 204 to 1,096 litres (7.20 to 38.70 cu.ft), braked towing weight 1,000 kg (2,204 lb), five doors/four seats.