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Suzuki SX4 S-Cross 1.4 Boosterjet SZ5 ALLGRIP Auto – Full Road Test

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Kim Henson takes the wheel of the facelifted 2017 version of Suzuki's SX4



S-Cross, in petrol-powered 1.4 litre Boosterjet form.

It is now three years since the original five seater, five door Suzuki SX4 S-Cross made its UK debut. This was the company's first 'C' segment 'Crossover' model (aimed at families as well as corporate/fleet buyers) and it impressed motoring writers and buyers alike with its happy combination of impressive abilities, all-round versatility and practicality plus generous space for passengers and luggage. Indeed, in August 2014 our 'Wheels-Alive' road test verdict on the 1.6 litre diesel version of the newcomer was, "...a competent, spacious and versatile vehicle, ideal for family use. However, equally it is also fun to drive, as well as being frugal on fuel."

Of course, things don't stand still in the world of new cars, and Suzuki has now amended and upgraded the model in many areas...

As recently reported by Tom Scanlan for 'Wheels-Alive' on the latest versions of Suzuki's SX4 S-Cross models (to read Tom's impressions, please [CLICK HERE](#)), the new models don't *just* represent a facelift. Yes, from the outside they are noticeably bolder, especially in terms of more imposing frontal styling that features a new grille and revised headlamps – plus new rear LED lamp assemblies and a ground clearance slightly increased by 15 mm (0.59 in) to 180 mm (7.09 in). However, the changes go far deeper than these aspects.



The interior has been fully revised, with a newly-designed, soft-touch facia, plus new upholstery for the seats in SZ4 and SZ-T variants. The SZ5 (the top-of-the-line version forming the subject of this road test) also incorporates a standard-fit double sliding panoramic glass sun roof (the use of twin sliding glass panels in this way is said to be a world first), with a large opening section measuring 560 mm (over 22 inches) – said to be one of the largest in its class.



To the uninitiated the model designations may be a little confusing, but to put them in context, the line-up starts with the SZ4 (from £14,999 for the 1.0 petrol model with a manual gearbox), then comes the SZ-T (from £19,499), which is aimed at fleet/corporate markets but is also available to private buyers, with the SZ5 (£22,849 for the manual version; £24,199 for the auto) being the very plush range topper.

All versions are built at the Magyar Suzuki facility in Hungary, where the Swift and Vitara are also produced.



Body Language

High tensile steel has been used extensively throughout the body shell of all the new models (together with stiffened mountings for the suspension components etc.), helping optimise rigidity and thus handling, plus 'NVH' ('Noise, Vibration and Harshness') performance, as well as optimising emissions and fuel consumption. The vehicle's crashworthiness has also been improved by this approach.

Extensive work in the wind tunnel and using computer-aided engineering technologies have together helped to provide effective aerodynamics, also aiding performance, economy and emissions.

The impact-absorbing light-in-weight body shell assembly (incorporating Suzuki's 'Total Effective Control Technology' or 'TECT'), plus an array of clever built-in active and passive safety systems (including, for example, the use of seven air bags), have together enabled the new S-Cross models to be awarded the coveted 5-star Euro NCAP rating. The S-Cross also features a variety of measures to protect pedestrians in the event of an impact.

Drivetrains

SX4 S-Cross customers can now choose between one of three engines not used previously in this model. These start with a three cylinder, 12 valve 1.0 litre Boosterjet K10C petrol unit (developing 111 PS), then there's a four cylinder, 16 valve 1.4 litre Boosterjet K14C petrol motor (producing 140 PS), or for those preferring diesel power there is the four cylinder, 16 valve 1.6 litre DDiS D16AA type diesel unit (giving 120 PS, but with a considerably higher torque output than the petrol engines).

All the units have been developed with the aim of maximising performance while minimising fuel consumption and emissions, compared with the model's previous motors. CO₂ emissions start at just 106 g/km (from the 1.6 DDiS diesel unit), rising to (for example) 113 g/km for the two wheel drive 1.0 Boosterjet version and increasing to a maximum of 128 g/km for the 1.4 litre Boosterjet model with automatic transmission.



The four cylinder, 16 valve 1.4 litre Boosterjet K14C petrol motor in our test car.

The Boosterjet motors were first used by Suzuki in the Vitara S and Baleno, and I very much liked the way that the 1.0 litre three cylinder version of this engine performed in the Baleno saloon that I road-tested earlier this year (to read this report, please [CLICK HERE](#)). Tom was similarly full of praise when he drove the latest SX4 S-Cross so-equipped, at the recent launch of the new line-up.

All versions of the S-Cross feature an 'Engine Auto Stop Start' ('EASS') system, to turn off the engine (saving fuel and emissions) when the car is at a halt.

Incidentally, for the latest line-up, gone is the 1.6 litre petrol motor offered in the first generation SX4 S-Cross models.



Transmissions are six speed manual or six speed automatic units, and ALLGRIP four wheel drive is available with all three engine types.

Running Gear

Redesigned MacPherson strut front suspension components are said to aid rigidity and stability, and a beam type rear suspension set-up is used, with the aim of providing high levels of stability and ride comfort.

During development of the vehicle, reduced weight brake calipers were introduced; they also provide less drag, helping to improve braking and fuel consumption. Ventilated front brake discs are fitted with solid discs at the rear.

Suzuki says that the S-Cross was endowed with positive handling characteristics, developed from those of the Swift, plus direct straight-line running stability, courtesy of a long wheelbase.

Interior and Equipment

It is said that the new car's interior was designed with comfort on long journeys in mind. The S-Cross also provides one of the biggest luggage compartments in its vehicle class, at a minimum of 430 litres (15.19 cu.ft) with all three rear seats occupied by passengers.

All versions are well-equipped in terms of standard specification, including (for example) seven airbags, ESP (Electronic Stability programme), a DAB radio stereo system, Bluetooth connectivity, daytime running lamps, air conditioning, cruise control incorporating a speed limiter, and heated door mirrors.

The SZ-T additionally has front and rear proximity sensors, a rear parking camera, Dual Zone automatic air conditioning, LED projector headlamps, satellite navigation, polished 17 inch aluminium alloy road wheels (compared with 16 inch alloys on the SZ4), front fog lamps, rear privacy glass and other features.



Buyers of the SZ5 are able to enjoy further standard equipment in the shape of leather upholstery, heated front seats, and Radar Brake Support (a sophisticated system which employs milliwave radar technology to warn the driver about the risk of a frontal collision, and ultimately will apply the brakes automatically if it senses that a crash is unavoidable). Adaptive Cruise Control (which also uses the milliwave radar of the Radar Brake Support system, to automatically adjust road speed according to the vehicle in front, at one of three distances that can be selected by the driver) is also included, together with aluminium roof rails and the panoramic double sun roof already referred to.

A single solid paint finish ('Superior White') is offered, plus five Metallic colours, each of which costs an additional £430.





OUR ROAD TEST CAR

The test car for this feature was a 1.4 litre Boosterjet ALLGRIP (four wheel drive) version, in top-of-the-tree SZ5 form, with 140 PS on offer, plus a maximum torque output of 220 Nm (162 lb.ft) produced all the way from 1,500 to 4,000 rpm. Now that is an impressive rev range... For the record, this compares with 170 Nm (125 lb.ft) delivered between 2,000 and 3,500 rpm from the three cylinder 1.0 litre Boosterjet motor, and 320 Nm (236 lb.ft) at 1,750 rpm from the 1.6 litre DDiS diesel engine. Interestingly, the four cylinder 1.4 litre Boosterjet and the three cylinder 1.0 litre unit are both said to be superior in terms of performance, fuel consumption and emissions, compared with the outgoing 1.6 litre petrol motor.

Particularly notable is the increase in available torque, with the 220 Nm (162 lb.ft) developed by 1.4 litre Boosterjet representing 41 per cent more than the previous, 1.6 litre unit. The 1.4 engine is also considerably more powerful (by 17 per cent) and more fuel-efficient (four per cent better).

At the root of the characteristics of these engines is a small displacement, high torque turbocharger (with a boost pressure of 1.1 Bar), which enables the engine to be kept compact in size and low in weight, while delivering power and torque figures more usually associated with larger capacity units, yet at the same time maintaining excellent fuel consumption and emissions performance.

The turbocharger is fastened directly to the cylinder head, which incorporates the engine's exhaust manifold. These measures are aimed at virtually eliminating turbo 'lag' (delay in power delivery), by helping to achieve maximum gas flow with minimal heat loss, through to the turbocharger assembly.

The Boosterjet system operates to control the turbocharger's wastegate valve, which is closed (thus creating increased boost pressure) when the engine is working hard/under heavy load conditions, and is open during normal driving. This method of control ensures that pumping losses are minimised, thereby helping to achieve high power output with



minimum consumption of petrol.

In addition, an air by-pass valve is incorporated into the system, to avoid turbo 'stall' in the event of the throttle being closed and then rapidly opened again.

Innovatory thinking with the Boosterjet engines is also evident in the adoption of six-hole fuel injectors, together with the use of high tumble port technologies, to further enhance power, torque and economy.

During the air inlet stroke, petrol is injected into the combustion chamber under very high pressure, thus forming a fuel-rich mixture in the vicinity of the spark plug, with leaner mixture characteristics around the perimeter of the piston top. The tumble flow of the fuel is achieved by employing a straight inlet port and a complex design of piston crown.

Suzuki says that these technical innovations combine to give an engine that delivers its power and torque smoothly, and from lower speeds than usually associated with turbocharged motors.

Transmission

Our test vehicle featured a six speed, full automatic gearbox (rather than the automated manual type as fitted found to some other Suzukis). This can be operated from the normal floor-mounted transmission controller, or, in 'manual' mode, by ratio change paddles which sit just behind the steering wheel. An extended lockup range within the transmission helps in terms of fuel consumption, performance and NVH characteristics.

Suzuki's four-mode ALLGRIP four wheel drive system was fitted to our SZ5 test car (it's also available on the SZ-T version). This set-up, introduced with the original S-Cross and also now used in the Vitara, builds on Suzuki's enviable history of producing effective all wheel drive systems, offering easy operation by the driver, and providing additional traction when required, on a variety of 'difficult' surfaces, but also minimising its effect on petrol consumption and emissions.



While this four wheel drive system was being developed, a useful 'feed forward' function was built-in, to provide torque to the rear wheels before any slippage occurs. This anticipates slippage (using inputs from sensors monitoring the road surface, throttle position, steering angle and other factors) before it happens, and acts to prevent it, thereby improving vehicle stability. If the front wheels do slip, again torque is transferred to the rears.



The four separate ALLGRIP system modes, that can be selected by the driver using a rotary control close to the handbrake, are:

'Auto' – giving two wheel drive for normal road use (and thus optimising fuel consumption), but automatically engaging four wheel drive if wheel spin is detected.

'Sport' – ideal for twisting roads and using the four wheel drive system according to accelerator use. At low to mid-range engine speeds, the system adjusts the accelerator/torque characteristics to optimise response from the engine, also cornering performance.

'Snow' – for slippery surfaces, engaging four wheel drive and using this to best effect in response to accelerator and steering inputs, in terms of stability and traction.

'Lock' – Specifically intended for extricating the car from snow, sand or mud, employing a limited slip differential to brake any wheel that is slipping and transfer torque to the wheels that are gripping. In this mode the system feeds high torque to the rear wheels, at all times.



Built-in too (on all S-Cross models) is 'Hill Hold Control', to prevent the car from rolling backwards during hill starts (it holds the car for two seconds while the driver moves his or her right foot from the brake pedal to the accelerator).

Real Life

It is clear that much thought has gone into the design of the car, to make it user-friendly, and especially for everyday family use.

Everyone, without exception, who travelled in the S-Cross during my time with the test car, commented on how pleasant, spacious and comfortable it is... In addition they appreciated the wide-opening doors, front and rear, and also liked the neatly upholstered leather-trimmed seats of this SZ-5 version.

This slideshow requires JavaScript.

Rear seat passengers commented on the generous amounts of head, leg and shoulder room, the centre folding arm rest (which incorporates twin cup holders), also the provision of twin roof-mounted lamps, one above each rear door, in addition to twin lamps adjacent to the rear view mirror in the front. All illuminate on opening the doors, leaving no-one in the dark...

The height adjuster for the driver's seat has been set up to accommodate a wide range of driver sizes/shapes, and the backs of the front seats have been shaped to provide plenty of knee room for rear seat occupants.

Those travelling in the rear seats can adjust the seat backrest angle to provide optimum comfort/relaxation (angled slightly rearwards) or to maximise luggage space - with the seat backs in this position an additional 10 litres (0.35 cu.ft) of luggage space is available, over and above the 430 litres (15.19 cu.ft) already mentioned.

A further practical feature is that the rear seat and luggage board can be set in different



positions, depending on the load being carried.

When required, the rear seat backs (divided 2/3 – left-hand side:1/3 – right-hand side) can be folded forwards to form a near-flat floor, which extends forwards from bumper level so that loading/unloading is easy. In this mode the luggage capacity extends to 875 litres (30.90 cu.ft).

The panoramic glass sun roof is a great feature of the SZ5 version (as tested) too... The sun roof covers the front and rear seats, and when the twin glass panels are closed, it has a length of 1,000 mm (3.28 ft). When the roof is open, the aperture is 560 mm (1.84 ft) long, representing one of the largest in this class of vehicle. During my road test, due to varying weather conditions there were limited opportunities to open the roof, but on the few fine days encountered it provided welcome sunlight and fresh air, without buffeting (an air deflector is fitted at its forward edge). With the glass panels closed, a special inner cover section of headlining covers the underside of the glass, yet still allows plenty of light into the interior.

Storage areas within the vehicle include bottle holders in each of the doors, plus long bins in the front doors, small compartments ahead of, and behind, the centre console (including a deep, lidded storage box/centre arm rest which also houses a USB port), an elasticated pocket built into the back of the front passenger seat, and a 'dropdown' lidded glovebox. The vehicle's superb handbook is accommodated within the glovebox, and usefully includes comprehensive information on looking after and servicing the vehicle – so refreshing to find this, if ever an owner needs to know in the future... Well done Suzuki.



The luggage compartment is flat-floored, wide, deep and long, even with the rear seats occupied. I was pleased to discover a 12 volt socket, a 'bag' hook and small, but handy and deep storage compartments in the boot; there's one of these 'cubby holes' on each side and these are very useful for holding smaller items such as cameras, etc, to prevent them from skating around within the luggage area. In addition, there's a spacious full-width tray beneath the main boot floor, and this is tucked away out of sight. Further down still is a well in the rear floor section of the body shell, in which the emergency tyre inflation kit is stored. Personally I would much rather have a spare wheel here. An accessory space saver spare, priced at £147 including VAT is available; for many it would provide peace of mind...



Great finish

Many friends and members of my family commented on the excellent paint finish on the test car, finished in Sphere Blue pearl metallic. This, like all the colours offered by Suzuki on the SX4 S-Cross (apart from 'Superior White') adds £430 to the cost of the vehicle. Difficult to describe in words, but the colour tones vary according to available light, and when illuminated by sunlight the rich built-in sparkle of the flawless finish blue paint on our car has to be seen to be fully appreciated.

The high quality finish extended throughout the vehicle, including the interior which I found welcoming, accommodating and practical. The driving position (with a multitude of adjustments possible, including seat and steering column height) suited me very well, providing a good view of the road ahead.

The built-in driver-assistance systems on our SZ-5 provided invaluable help when reversing (ultrasonic parking sensors are standard on this version, also the SZ-T), and when carrying out manoeuvres in close proximity to other vehicles, buildings, etc, with an array of warning buzzers letting you know that you are moving close to such objects!

I found the instruments - including the oh-so-useful trip/mpg computer - to be easy to understand and the switchgear was also straightforward to control. The satellite navigation/reversing camera touchscreen assembly worked well for me too, and I liked the fact that the controls for the air conditioning (dual zone, so that the driver and front seat passenger can control the settings to their personal preferences) were separate from the touchscreen set-up which served the sound system and satellite navigation set-up, etc. The dual zone air conditioning system includes individual rotary controls for the driver and front seat occupant, allowing rapid and unmistakeable control of cabin temperature, in steps of 0.5 degrees C for precise adjustment.

Switches for the Adaptive Cruise Control, Radar Brake System and Engine Auto Stop Start system are all within easy reach of the driver, on or close to the steering wheel.



Driving

The 1.4 litre, four cylinder Boosterjet engine was a revelation, propelling the test car quietly and with uncanny smoothness, and I found that it was delightfully willing and user-friendly too. Based on experience with other Suzukis, I expected it to be good, but it exceeded my expectations.

The motor was unfussy in traffic, with bags of torque available from low speeds, but when leaving urban area speed limits behind, the car felt eager to romp rapidly up to fast cruising mode. At 70 mph with the auto box 'relaxing' in top (sixth) ratio, the engine was turning at a hushed 2,000 rpm and long trips proved effortless for the Suzuki and all its occupants.

The automatic transmission provided smooth, fast ratio changes both up and down the box, and engaging the 'manual' gearchange control paddles behind the steering wheel enabled 'instant' gearchanges to be made at will.

In most circumstances for normal road use, the standard two wheel drive mode provides impressive performance and optimum fuel economy. However, when on my own in the car, for part of one long journey on a twisting road that I know very well, I rotated the transmission mode control clockwise to the 'Sport' position, which instantly sharpened the car's dynamic characteristics, with engine and suspension responding accordingly. In this situation the SX4 S-Cross felt sharper and more lively, becoming truly sporty in nature, and was great fun to drive.

I should add that I didn't need to try the 'Snow' or 'Lock' transmission modes during my road test, although their incorporation into the vehicle would provide reassurance for owners who need to use their car slippery conditions, and especially those living in country districts...

Back in everyday normal auto 'Drive' mode, I found the suspension to be well-damped and firm but comfortable, the handling impressive, with little body roll evident during cornering, and the braking safe and reassuringly progressive without feeling over-servo'd. I also liked



the weighting and feel of the power-assisted steering. This provided helpful assistance when needed during low speed manoeuvres, yet also provided positive feel and feedback at higher road speeds.

I found that the audio system provided a rich sound quality, the only downside for me personally is that there is no CD player as part of the system, although I realise that many buyers would connect up their own MP3 devices...

The official Combined fuel consumption figure for the model tested is 49.5 mpg. During the 650 miles I drove the car, in a variety of situations including in-town running, countryside touring, long trips and, at times, fast road use, it averaged 42.4 mpg according to the car's own on-board trip computer, a figure with which I was very satisfied.



Any not-so-good aspects?

In truth I am struggling to find any meaningful criticisms of this SX4 S-Cross, although personally I still wish that a CD player and a spare wheel were included in the standard specification.



For those who like to wash their own vehicles, I will also mention that when I hand-washed this one, I found that the intricate design of both the new front grille and the smart-looking road wheels meant that work with a sponge in these areas took quite a while.

I feel the fact that these aspects are the only 'adverse' comments that I can think of speaks volumes for just how good this car is...

VERDICT

Fabulous! During the 650 miles I covered in this Suzuki, I came to know it very well and appreciated its many virtues. It impressed me with its all-round competence and truly I looked forward to driving it at every opportunity (on a daily basis I drive a wide variety of vehicles and that isn't always the case!).

This SX4 S-Cross is comfortable, highly practical for a family and enjoyable to drive. It's also reasonably economical in terms of fuel consumption. In SZ5 form, as tested, it is extremely well-equipped too, and represents excellent value for your money.



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Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

Suzuki SX4 S-Cross 1.4 Boosterjet SZ5 ALLGRIP automatic.

Body: Five doors, five seats.

Engine: 1373cc 16 valve four cylinder. (Euro 6 emissions-compliant)

Transmission: Six speed automatic (six speed manual gearbox also available); ALLGRIP four wheel drive.



Power: 140 PS @ 5,500 rpm.

Torque: 220 Nm (162 lb.ft) @ 1,500 to 4,000 rpm.

Performance (automatic, four wheel drive version, as tested):

0-62 mph: 10.2 sec.

Top speed: 124 mph.

Fuel consumption (manual): Official Combined, 49.5 mpg (on test, with mixed motoring, overall average over 650.7 miles was 42.4 mpg).

Fuel tank capacity: 47 litres (10.34 gallons).

Theoretical mileage range on a full tank at the official Combined figure: More than 511 miles.

Theoretical mileage range on a full tank at the overall mpg we achieved: More than 438 miles.

CO2 emissions: 128 g/km.

Taxation: VED Band D, Zero rate for the first year, then £110 per year.

Dimensions: Length 4,300 mm (14.11 ft), Width 1,785mm (5.86 ft), Height 1,585mm (5.20 ft), Wheelbase 2,600 mm (8.53 ft).

Luggage capacity: 430 litres (15.19 cu.ft), with rear seat in fully upright position, extending to 875 litres (30.90 cu.ft) with seat fully folded.

Gross vehicle weight: 1,870 kg (4,123 lb).



Max. braked towing weight: 600 kg (1,323 lb).

Warranty: Three years/60,000 miles, plus one year AA Suzuki Assistance, and 12 year bodywork perforation warranty.

Price ('On the Road'): Test car price, before options, £24,199 (our car, as tested, including Sphere Blue metallic paintwork, costing £430, priced at £24,629).

Note: If you are interested in reading David Miles' views on this model, published on 6th January 2017 (and after a recent price increase), please click [HERE](#).