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Suzuki Vitara – First Impressions

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Chris Adams test drives a 1.4 litre Boosterjet all wheel drive version of Suzuki's compact Vitara.

(All words and photos by Chris).

Before the sports utility vehicle became an essential part of every manufacturer's line-up, a few car makers bravely ploughed a lone furrow with compact four-wheel drives – among these pioneers was Suzuki who never really received the credit for being ahead of the game.

The all-purpose Jeep-like SJ led to the Jimny, while Suzuki was among the first to offer a budget level family sized four by four in the shape of the Vitara, a name that proudly lives



on today, three decades after it was first launched.

Overtaken in the profile stakes by almost everyone else, the five-door, five-seat Vitara has continued to offer a practical, reliable and spacious package for those owners who might just want the extra reassurance of all-wheel drive.

The latest Hungarian built Vitara is a bit more grown-up compared to its predecessors and looks a lot better than the rather bland anonymous panel-work that went before, although it isn't going to win any design awards.

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On the outside it has a strong purposeful stance that avoids any unnecessary embellishments; as ever with Suzuki the Vitara is more substance than style, with a contemporary and straightforward appearance.

There are, however, some neat touches that lift what could have been a drab profile, such as the 17inch black finish alloy wheels, rear spoiler, wheel arch extensions, front and rear silver skid plates, silver roof rails, chrome strips across the grille and sides and black eyebrows for the fog lights

Inside it's much the same with a chunky upright dashboard (a little heavy in execution) and red highlights for the instrument and air vent surrounds, stitching on the seating (part suede) leather steering wheel and gear lever.

The compact exterior dimensions hide a cabin that is, in fact, quite roomy with both front and rear seat occupants well accommodated, and behind that a deep luggage compartment that will carry a generous 375 litres (13.24 cu.ft) all day long or be expanded with the rear seats folded to 710 litres (25.07 cu.ft).

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Equipment levels on this Vitara S (as tested) are quite generous so as well as front and rear parking sensors you get a rear parking camera, adaptive cruise control, air conditioning, DAB digital radio (with steering wheel controls) , satellite navigation, Bluetooth connection and Smartphone link.

On the Road

Among the choice of Vitara power units the most responsive is unusually the smallest capacity - relatively modest sounding 1373cc petrol that, thanks to direct injection turbocharging, unleashes a healthy 140 bhp which enables it to bowl along to 62 mph in a fraction over 10 seconds.





The in-gear responses through the optional six-speed automatic transmission are surprisingly good and the Vitara will push on hard in any gear selected. At the same time it doesn't burn fuel at an exorbitant rate to achieve this performance.

A respectful driver should be able to get close to 50 mpg, in part contributed by engine stop-start technology.

Suzuki has gone for comfort over sporting handling when it comes to the suspension. It soaks up a lot of punishment but on flat surfaces can feel a little over-sprung.

Life behind the wheel is better with a good level of feedback to the steering wheel so you always feel in command and it does encourage you to push a little harder than you might normally.

Suzuki fits the Vitara with a simple ALLGRIP four-wheel drive system with four selectable modes to offer that extra bit of traction on slippery surfaces and with 185 mm (7.28 in) of ground clearance gets over most minor obstacles.

VERDICT

If you aren't badge-conscious or a style aficionado then the Suzuki Vitara offers a good overall package in a family sized SUV - one that has a reputation for reliability and a respected heritage to back it up.

It's relaxing to drive, well appointed, has more cabin space than you might expect, a good sized boot and should be relatively cheap to run with VED at £160 after the first year and group 16E insurance.

Kim adds: If you are interested in finding out what we thought (in 2017) of a selection of Suzuki's 4×4 models in use in off (and on) road use, please click [HERE](#).



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Wheels-Alive Tech Spec. in Brief:

Vehicle: Suzuki Vitara Boosterjet S Auto

Engine: 1373cc petrol

Transmission: Six-speed Automatic

Power: 140 PS @ 5,500 rpm



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

Performance:

0-62mph: 10.2 seconds

Top Speed: 124 mph

Fuel Consumption (Official Figures):

Urban: 44.1 mpg

Extra-Urban: 56.5 mpg

Combined: 51.3 mpg

CO2 Emissions: 127 g/km

Price (On the Road as tested): £25,099.