Latest Suzuki Ignis Hybrid – Road Test by David Miles

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SUZUKI IGNIS HYBRID SZ5 ALLGRIP CITY CAR CROSSOVER

David Miles (Miles Better News Agency) gives his verdict.

City slicker meets countryside pony is how I would describe the top specification model in the revised Suzuki Ignis range.

All models now have a new 1.2 litre four cylinder K12D Dualjet Hybrid petrol engine offering WLTP CO2 emissions from 114g/km and combined cycle fuel economy from 55.7 mpg for the 2WD models. And you will note from those last few words I say 2WD model so that means there is a 4WD option, yes there is but only with the top level SZ5 specification.

The spec options are SZ3, SZ-T and SZ5 and prices start at £13,999 for the SZ3 model with its standard 2WD traction and rise to £17,499 for the SZ5 Allgrip 4WD variant. Whilst a five speed manual gearbox is standard fit, a CVT automatic option costs an extra £1,000 and it is only available on 2WD models with SZ-T and SZ5 spec levels.



The Ignis is a crossover in terms of refreshed styling. It’s short, compact, chunky with a raised ride height and in its 2WD form ideal as a city car. Add the SZ5 spec and Allgrip 4WD system and it becomes a compact, lively potential on-off road mule for countryside duties. It could well be the answer to those Suzuki Jimny owners now that model has finished production for European markets. We know from years of experience Suzuki are experts at

producing sensible small cars and impressive small to medium off-roaders and the Ignis keeps up that reputation with its different model options.

Suzuki expects to sell around 6,000 of them in the UK in a full year – Covid lockdown regulations permitting. Although Crossover/SUV sales are high, small versions are limited in their availability and probably the Ignis SZ5 Allgrip model's competitor is the Fiat Panda 4×4 or Fiat 500X and if you go a little larger but comparable for price then it could be the Dacia Duster. If you treat the Ignis 2WD models as City Cars then there are lots of competitors such as the Fiat 500, Kia Picanto, Hyundai i100, Toyota Aygo and VW Up.

So what specification do we get for our money? Standard fit is air conditioning, six airbags, LED headlights, rear privacy glass, DAB radio and Bluetooth connectivity. The SZ-T adds individually sliding rear seats, rear view camera, wheel arch extensions, side mouldings and roof rails, 16-inch alloy wheels and Smartphone Link Display Audio with Apple Carplay and Android Auto. Venture into the top SZ5 spec level and the additions include auto air conditioning, satellite navigation, cruise control, keyless entry and engine start, door mirror mounted indicators, Dual Camera Brake Support, Lane Departure Warning and Driving Lane Weaving Alert.

Those are the contents, what about the wrapping? For the August 2020 introduction of the latest Ignis the styling facelift provides a more rugged compact SUV appearance. Suzuki says the new Ignis reinforces its unique position as the only ultra-compact SUV on the market. It has a new front grille and bumpers, a wide choice of exterior and interior colours, boosted by the efficiency-enhanced engine with its uprated hybrid system.

The clamshell bonnet is retained above the Ignis 5-spoke grill and headlights which gives an appealing cheeky expression I think. The wheelarch mouldings, robust rear shoulders, strong looking front and rear bumpers featuring trapezoid shape silver under body garnishes, amplify the overall SUV character and unique style. It has an 'I might be small but don't mess with me' attitude. The Tough Khaki pearl metallic paintwork of my test car enhanced its street-cred and off-road image.

The platform of the latest Ignis has a reduction of weight as well as further increased rigidity. Body rigidity has been enhanced by approximately 10% per cent and a new structure with very high tensile steel is used to reduce the total vehicle weight by around 15 per cent. The lightest Ignis model has a kerb weight of 895 kg 1,973 lb) even in the highly equipped SZ5 2WD model and 940 kg (2,072 lb) for the Allgrip version.

Inside it is much as before with sweeping horizontal styling lines which convey width and a feeling of space. In the rear two seats are fine for children but with limited leg space for adults. But being a 5-door body means rear passengers have their own doors for ease of access. The squabs of the front seats are on the small side and lack support near the edges. With the rear seats in use the boot space is just 204 litres (7.20 cu.ft) for the 4WD version, 260 litres (9.18 cu.ft) for the 2WD models. With the rear seat backs folded down this goes up to 490/514 litres (17.30/18.15 cu.ft) to the waistline and up to 1,096/1,100 litres (38.70/38.85 cu.ft) loaded to the top of the front seat head restraints depending on the model.

Thankfully the Ignis retains sensible individual controls and buttons either on the fascia or steering wheel and the display screen is mainly about sat-nav operations. It’s not the most modern or fastest loading navigation system but it was simple to use.

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Does it measure up for size, will it fit your urban parking space or town house narrow garage and will you easily find a parking slot at a trendy country food market? It is 3,700 mm (12.14 ft) long, it’s 1,690 mm (5.54 ft) wide and 1,605 mm (5.27 ft) high so you can judge it’s tall and narrow but also short. The wheelbase is 2,435 mm (7.99 ft) and it has a braked towing weight capacity of 1,000 kg (2,205 lb).

The Tall height, narrow body and 180 mm (7.09 in) of tall ground clearance do of course have an effect on the car’s handling. In windy conditions it proved a bit of a handful on a motorway journey but on winding country roads it coped, was reasonably predictable with

steering which could have given a bit more feedback during cornering. However in its city car domain the steering proved to be sharp with a 9.4 metres (30.84 ft) turning circle.

For such a tall, short wheelbase vehicle the revised suspension settings provide a compliant ride with only broken and potholed town road surfaces giving it a choppy performance.

So it’s on to the biggest change for the latest Ignis, the use of hybrid support for the petrol engine. In common with most other manufacturers with cars using combustion engines, to lower the emission levels to meet or get close to the new levels required in 2021, hybrid support systems are popular – and some are complex and some more simple and readily available.

The revised core 1.2 litre, four cylinder petrol engine uses Suzuki’s latest Dualjet technology, which uses twin fuel injectors per cylinder, close to the inlet valves for finer fuel/air atomisation into the revised combustion chambers and bowl shaped piston crowns. The engine also uses electronically controlled variable valve timing which alters the opening and closing time of the inlet valves depending on the load placed on the engine.



The engine is paired with a 12-volt self-charging hybrid system and new 10 Ah lithium-ion battery. The hybrid system uses an Integrated Starter Generator (ISG). This unit is belt driven and assists the petrol engine during initial vehicle take-off and acceleration modes. It also generates electricity through regenerative braking recharging both the lithium-ion battery and the conventional 12-volt battery and it operates the fuel saving Stop/Start system.

The engine/hybrid power output is 83 hp with torque output of 107 Nm (79 lb.ft) at 2,800 rpm. Top speed is 103 mph with zero to 62 mph taking 12.8 seconds. All modest figures I venture to suggest but in keeping with its size and use. Matched with a precise action five speed manual gearbox the eager revving engine needed to be kept in its most comfortable area of the powerband as losing revs and the responsive momentum was lost.

The Suzuki Allgrip Auto system is well known; it's simple, fully automatic and provides permanent four-wheel drive which transfers additional torque via a viscous coupling system to the rear wheels when required. When the front wheels lose their grip the engine torque is automatically directed to the rear wheels to instantly regain vehicle traction.

Enhancements to the latest Ignis Allgrip Auto 4WD system include Hill Descent Control and Grip Control. Grip Control activates on slippery surfaces at speeds of less than 18 mph. Once switched on by the driver it focuses torque on the driven wheels that have grip and will quickly apply braking to the wheel that is spinning.

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Hill Descent Control activates once switched on by the driver and when the vehicle is travelling on an incline at under approximately 15 mph in first or second gear. Thanks to the use of small and lightweight components Ignis Allgrip is just 45 kg (99 lb) heavier than its equivalent 2WD model.

As for fuel economy and emissions the headline figure for the Ignis 2WD is the new WLTP rate CO2 of 114 g/km with a Combined Cycle figure of 55.7 mpg. For my 4WD test drive model the CO2 figure is 123 g/k and Combined Cycle at 51.9 mpg. My week of test driving using town and country roads, plus a longer motorway journey in high winds, the overall figure was 56.2 mpg. On one non-motorway run the figure was as high as 62 mpg – very impressive. It is higher sustained 70mph motorway speeds that lowered the overall figure. The engine despite its hybrid support also noticeably slowed up climbing moderately steep hills so it is horses for course. It will cope with long journeys but shorter in town, urban and country lanes is its home turf.

VERDICT

Practical, economical and a little different from the pack, with a few reservations as mentioned.

For: Compact dual role vehicle for city or rural motoring, very good real life fuel economy, well priced, well equipped, easy to drive, capable 4WD system, nice Tough Khaki paint colour.

Against: Very limited rear seat leg space for adults, front seat squabs are small and lack support, fidgety ride at times, old fashioned sluggish infotainment and sat-nav systems.



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

Suzuki Ignis 1.2 Hybrid SZ5 Allgrip 5-door city car crossover.

Price: £17,499.

Engine/transmission: 1.2 litre, four cylinder, Dualjet variable valve timing and starter/generator Hybrid assist 83 hp, 107 Nm (79 lb.ft) of torque at 2,800 rpm, five speed manual with 4WD.

Performance: 103 mph, 0 – 62 mph 12.8 seconds.

Fuel consumption: WLTP Combined Cycle 51.9 mpg (56.2 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 123 g/km. Alternative Fuel rate VED First Year road tax £165 then £140 Standard rate, BiK company car tax 27%.

Insurance Group: 19P (tbc).

Warranty: Three years/60,000 miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 3,700 mm (12.14 ft), W 1,690 mm (5.54 ft), H 1,605 mm (5.27 ft), wheelbase 2,435 mm (7.99 ft), boot/load space 204 to 1,086 litres (7.20 to 38.35 cu.ft), braked towing weight 1,000 kg (2,205 lb), five doors/four seats.