Latest version Suzuki Swace estate car – Road Test

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Kim Henson reports on living with Suzuki's Swace estate car during 750 miles of mixed everyday motoring...

(All words and photographs by, and copyright, Kim Henson).

These days SUVs rule, it seems, or at least they do for some buyers. However there are

many motorists who prefer the ‘traditional’ estate car approach to styling and construction. While Suzuki offers competence galore with the proven Vitara and S-Cross SUV models, plus the more recent Across plug-in hybrid SUV, their Swace is a well-thought-out estate car that offers alternative practicality within a sleek, modern low-slung package.

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The Swace is a British-built vehicle, developed in conjunction with Toyota, essentially based on their Corolla estate but with Suzuki badging and unique specification.

Importantly, the car is a self-charging hybrid, meaning that it can’t, and doesn’t need to, be plugged in to a mains electricity supply to recharge its traction battery. This receives its power from the vehicle’s own clever charging set-up, enabling the vehicle to be run for short distances (of up to just over half a mile at a time) on electric power alone, and with the electric motor ‘helping’ the petrol engine in everyday motoring. The traction battery is recharged from operation of the petrol engine, also through regenerative power developed during deceleration.

Thus there is none of the ‘range anxiety’ that can arise with pure battery EVs in terms of available mileage range; the car’s petrol engine will get you to your destination, even over long distances – provided of course that you have enough fuel! In addition there is no need for a home charging point, nor indeed for stopping at public chargers.

These aspects can still be very important to many prospective buyers.

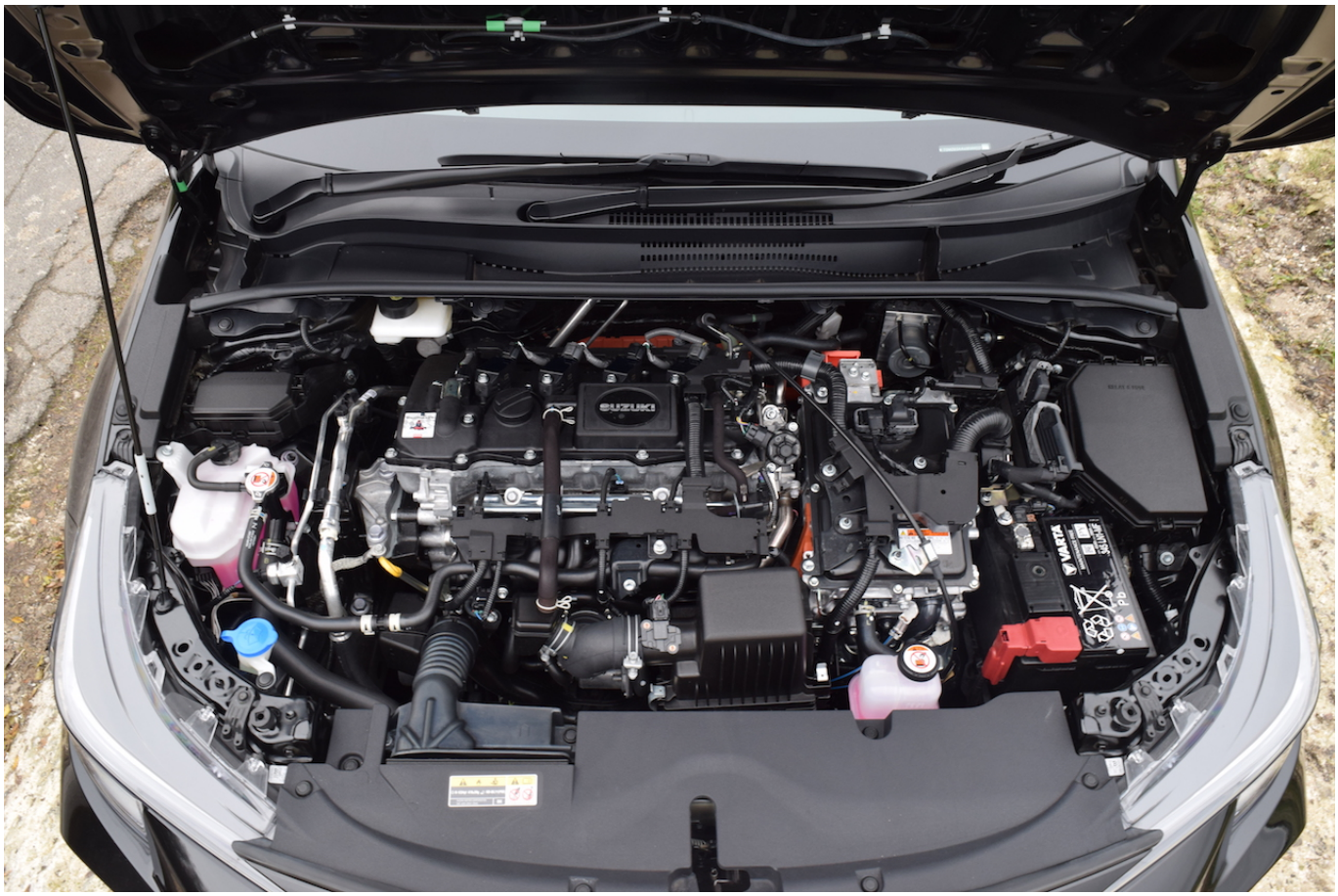
As mentioned, the car can be driven for short distances (when operating in ‘EV’ mode) just by electric power alone. This can be useful in many road situations, and very handy for driving in underground car parks, etc, and when especially quiet operation is desirable, for example late at night or early in the morning in urban settings. The EV mode is brought into play using an easy-action control button mounted on the centre console.

For driving in ‘Normal’, ‘Eco’ and ‘Sport’ modes (all controlled by a three-way switch

mounted on the centre console), the hybrid system automatically and seamlessly self-adjusts to use petrol and electric power together, in varying degrees between the two systems depending on the mode selected and driving style.

Since the first generation Swace arrived in 2021, the drivetrain has been upgraded, with the combined maximum power output from the petrol and electric motors raised from 122 bhp to 140 bhp (15 per cent more) due to the application of a higher output electric motor, working in conjunction with a larger capacity traction battery pack.

The 1.8 litre petrol four cylinder unit produces 97 bhp @ 5,200 rpm, and the electric motor develops 70 Kw (previously 53 Kw).



Suzuki says that the upgrades, while significantly improving performance, have had negligible effects on emissions and fuel consumption; the WLTP CO2 emissions figure is 102 g/km, and the WLTP Combined fuel consumption figure is an impressive 62.7 mpg.

The revised current Swace range comprises Motion and Ultra variants, priced at £29,599 and £31,399 respectively; my test car for this feature was the Ultra version.

The original Swace was already comprehensively-equipped, but in its upgraded 2023 form the model features enhanced safety and equipment specification levels, also improved digital and multimedia features, as well as revisions to the car's styling and lighting.

On both versions standard-fit equipment includes: Emergency Driving Stop system, LED rear lamps, seven airbags, Dual Zone automatic air conditioning, eight-inch colour LCD information screen, heated front seats, heated steering wheel, Smart phone link for wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto device connectivity, rear parking camera, a new digital instrument cluster with three display modes, Type C USB port and Dynamic Radar Cruise Control.

Additionally, the range-topping Ultra variant, covered in this report, features: Updated Bi-LED projector headlamps, Safe Exit Assist, Smart Door Locking, front and rear park distance sensors, Blind Spot Monitor, Rear Cross Traffic Alert, interior ambient lighting, and a centre console tray with wireless charger.

One of the aspects of Suzuki models that I like is the fact that buyers do not have to wade through complex option lists, which can often add considerably to the expected price of the vehicle. The Swace models, as with other Suzukis, come comprehensively-equipped, just with metallic or mica paintwork, depending on chosen colour (add £600) or pearlescent white paint (plus £900) as extra-cost options. The pricing is therefore straightforward and 'transparent'.



On the Road



While I had sampled the latest version of the Swace during two brief test drives, driving the model for a week over 750 miles in a variety of road and weather conditions, for short and long distance journeys, provided a better insight into the car's capabilities and characteristics.

Although I felt that the first generation Swace (test-driven by me in 2021) gave good performance, the latest version felt noticeably more eager.

According to Suzuki figures the standing start acceleration time from rest to 62 mph has been significantly reduced from 11.1 to 9.4 seconds; and I discovered that the car also feels far more lively during 'on the move' accelerating – handy when overtaking, for example.

In fact, although it's not intended to be a sports car, I enjoyed the sporty feel of the Swace, which found was very happy to run rapidly when required. This was especially the case when 'Sport' mode was engaged (using the triple mode control switch on the centre console). This provided sharper throttle responses than with the car in the 'Normal' drive mode, although I found this setting fine for most of my driving. I also tried the 'Eco' mode, which is designed to give optimum fuel economy, but I understand that in real world motoring the petrol consumption benefits, compared with 'Normal' mode are negligible.

Operation of the transmission settings is straightforward, with smooth movement of the control lever from 'Park' to 'Drive', and once this is engaged the transmission works seamlessly and automatically. In addition to the usual 'Drive' and 'Reverse' settings is a 'B' position for the control lever, which is used to provide engine braking when descending steep hills (for example). I found that this worked well on some of the formidable gradients encountered during a west country tour.



As with the first series cars, fast cruising is quiet and smooth, with mechanical refinement notably good. In fact the car is hushed in operation, with the loudest sound being a little tyre ‘roar’ on some surfaces; however I didn’t find this intrusive.

I found the Swace’s ride comfort, roadholding and handling characteristics impressive, including when negotiating twisting west country roads, some of them with indifferent surfaces.

The steering felt positive in these situations and on the open road, and braking was reassuringly good too. I found the power steering to be user-friendly in its operation at all

speeds, and very easy on the arms during low speed manoeuvres. In addition the turning circle was commendably small, enabling easy parking/turning in tight spaces.

I felt that the comprehensive amount of vehicle information provided to the driver was excellent. I liked the main instrument panel, a model of clarity, with a prominent digital readout for road speed. There is a separate large touch screen in the centre of the facia. Both units provide a wealth of information at a glance.





Note: The figures shown on this screen appeared just after re-setting the system, so do not reflect actual mpg achieved. My overall figure was 61.6 mpg.

I should mention that the car's handbook is very detailed, and worth studying closely to get the most from the on-board trip and economy displays (as well as other aspects of the car). In addition it gives a great deal of useful information for those wishing to carry out do-it-yourself maintenance. Full marks here.

An aspect which impressed during some cold and wet weather experienced during my time with the Suzuki was that the heating and ventilation system worked very well, and quickly from a cold start. Equipped with front and rear heated screens, plus an effective fan system, the Swace was soon warm within, and the screens were rapidly cleared of moisture and ice.

The heated steering wheel and front seats were also welcome.

Notably, and wisely from a safety viewpoint, the heating/air con system is operated from a series of buttons independent of the main touch screen, and can be operated instantly without the need to work through complex menu options – as found in many cars these days. The dual zone heating/air conditioning system enables individual, different settings to be made to suit the driver and front seat passenger respectively.

The front and rear screen washers and wipers are worthy of note for their effectiveness too, even in adverse weather conditions.

I found that the rear view camera was a helpful aid when reversing, and the 'proximity' sensors around the car were useful when carrying out manouvres in limited spaces. The intensity of the warning 'beeps' becomes stronger as the Swace nears cars or other objects, and if the 'stop' warning sound is ignored, the brakes are applied automatically.

Fuel consumption during my 750 miles with the vehicle averaged 61.6 miles per gallon, highly commendable for a fully loaded, spacious and sprightly estate car, and including some long spells in traffic queues plus urban motoring, as well as country lane meandering and fast motorway runs. Real world consumption during my time with the Swace worked out as being very close to the official 'Combined' figure of 62.7 mpg. Excellent, in my opinion.

Spacious interior and luggage compartment

I appreciated the low, sleek stance of the Swace, and within its five seater estate car body shell is a spacious interior capable of comfortably accommodating up to five adults.

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Wide-opening front and rear doors, plus generous head and leg room throughout, endeared it to my passengers too. The only note of caution here relates to the fact that tall passengers found the relatively low roof line had to be considered when entering and leaving the car;

they were fine once inside!

Of course, the low ride height of the car aids aerodynamics, but care needs to be taken if ever negotiating uneven ground, also when opening and closing doors close to low walls etc.

Crucially, leg room for rear seat occupants is much better than in many cars of comparable size. Importantly too, rear seat occupants who travelled some distance in the test car, reported that they liked the accommodating ride quality, as well as the generous available space that they enjoyed.

The front seats proved to be particularly comfortable, even over long distances, with good support from the side bolsters too.



Storage compartments within the vehicle are many, with a good-sized glove box, a lidded box towards the rear of the centre console, long ‘bins’ in each of the front doors, and shorter ones in the rear doors. These are not huge but handy for smaller items. There is also an elasticated pocket built into the rear of the front passenger seat, plus twin cup holders within the centre console and two more in the folding arm rest in the centre of the rear seat.



There is a huge load compartment; available space for carrying luggage and other items is important for estate cars of course. For the record, Suzuki figures advise that with all the rear seats occupied it has a capacity of 596 litres (21.05 cu.ft), but with the seats folded this increases to 1,232 litres (43.51 cu.ft) and its platform length is 1,860mm (73.23 in). The load compartment width is 1,430 mm (56.30 in) and the height of the tailgate aperture is 850 mm (33.46 in). Helpfully too, the load platform is at bumper level, so that

loading/unloading is straightforward.

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It should be mentioned that the boot floor panel can be set in one of two positions, the lower one providing more height for luggage in the main boot. The panel can also be turned upside-down, giving a ‘rubberised’ water-resisting surface ideal for carrying muddy boots etc.

Beneath the boot floor is a very useful large additional space which could be termed a ‘spare wheel well’, although the car does not come equipped with a spare (instead it has an emergency inflation kit). This well is circular, and during my time with the vehicle I found that it could hold an amazing amount of luggage, always hidden from view beneath the lifting panel forming the boot floor.



In addition, the main boot has a ‘roll-out’ cover, keeping luggage out of sight from outside the car.

Further features of note within the boot include a series of ‘strip’ lamps on each side, providing good illumination, and useful compartments on either side of the main boot; I found these useful for carrying cameras and a multitude of relatively small items.

VERDICT

Smart, highly practical with plenty of space for passengers and luggage, competitively

priced and fun to drive, with impressive credentials in both performance and fuel economy. The Swace also offers the convenience of a self-charging hybrid system that needs no charging from external sources. Yes, I loved it.

There's more… I have written a 'Motoring For Fun' feature for Wheels-Alive, covering a wintertime west country tour, and based around the Swace. To read this, please go to: a-festive-wintertime-west-country-tour-in-a-suzuki-swace/



Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

Suzuki Swace Ultra Hybrid estate

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Price: £31, 399 (including £600 for metallic paintwork).

Engine: Four cylinder, 16 valve 1.8 litre (1798cc), petrol, Euro 6d compliant.

Power: 102 PS @ 5,200 rpm.

Torque: Total 142 Nm (105 lb.ft) @ 3,600 rpm.

Electric motor: 70 kW, 185 Nm (136 lb.ft).

Transmission: CVT automatic; front wheel drive .

Performance:

0 – 62 mph: 9.4 seconds

Top speed: 112 mph.

Fuel consumption (‘Official’ figures):

WLTP figure: Combined, 62.7 mpg.

Our figure achieved over 750 miles, 61.6 mpg.

Fuel tank capacity: 43 litres (9.46 Imperial gallons).

Approximate range on full tank at WLTP ‘Combined’ mpg: 582 miles.

CO2 Emissions, WLTP: 102 g/km.

Warranty: Three years/60,000 miles (but five years/60,000 miles for the hybrid drivetrain components).

Insurance Group: 17E

Dimensions:

Length: 4,655 mm (15.27 ft)

Width: 1,790 mm (5.87 ft)

Height: 1,460 mm (4.79 ft)

Wheelbase: 2,700 mm (8.86 ft)

Ground clearance: 135 mm (5.31 in.)

Kerb weight: 1,420 kg (3,131 lb)

Luggage capacity 596 to 1,232 litres (21.05 to 43.51 cu.ft)

Others like it too…

It’s not just me who rates this car very highly… While I was preparing this road test report, news reached me that the Association of Scottish Motoring Writers has voted the Swace ‘Best Family Car of the Year’ (2023), also ‘Best Hybrid Car of the Year’.



Suzuki tells us:

(All words and image from Suzuki).

Suzuki is pleased to announce that it has won two category awards for Swace at the Scottish Car of The Year ceremony held in Edinburgh by the Association of Scottish Motoring Writers.

Swace was voted as Best Family Car of The Year as well as Best Hybrid Car of The Year following an intensive test program over the last 12 months with the 10 members of the Association recently assembling to cast their votes for the best new cars on the market.

For the Family Car Award, Alisdair Suttie, President of the Association said ‘The Suzuki Swace left the ASMW judges wondering if there was anything this fantastic estate couldn’t do as a family car. It’s roomy, has a large boot, plenty of safety tech, and it’s great to drive. The Swace is also economical, well built, and fits in with family life perfectly to make it a superb winner in this category.’

For the Best Hybrid Car Award, Alisdair Suttie continued ‘Hybrid cars have a huge amount to offer many drivers and the Suzuki Swace is a shining example of this. Its petrol-electric power works seamlessly together to deliver a fine drive and excellent economy. Just what drivers are looking for in these cost-conscious times.’

Dale Wyatt, Director of Automobile at Suzuki GB PLC comments: “We have 14 dealers in the Scottish Region and these awards are really positive news for us. The Swace is our first Estate Car which opens up further opportunities to win new buyers in the popular Hybrid segment.

We promise our customers Hybrid as Standard and we’re thrilled to win an award that emphasises our commitment to Hybrid and offering all the technology you need.’’

Following a model update earlier this year, the Swace Full Hybrid Motion is priced at £29,599 and is available for £299 per month over 48 months with a deposit of £5,496.33 and optional final payment of £13,323. The Swace mid-sized estate offers drivers excellent efficiency, space and versatility combined with dynamic styling. The update included an increase to the electric motor output which increased from 53kW to 70Kw, there were further improvements to the level of performance with the 0-62 mph time reduced to 9.4 seconds from 11.1.

Included in the upgrade, standard specification is even higher, and the Motion model includes Emergency Driving Stop system, LED rear lamps, seven airbags, Dual Zone automatic air conditioning, eight-inch LCD colour information screen, heated front seats, heated steering wheel, Smart phone link for wireless Apple CarPlay and wired Android Auto

device connectivity, rear parking camera, new digital instrument cluster with three display modes, type C USB port and Dynamic Radar Cruise control.

For an additional £30 per month, customers can step up to the Ultra model which adds Bi-LED projector headlights, Safe Exit Assist, Smart Door locking, Front and Rear Park distance sensors, Blind Spot Monitor, Rear Cross traffic Alert, interior ambient lighting, and centre console tray with wireless charger. These finance offers will continue until the end of this year (2023).