Suzuki celebrates 40 years of the Swift, in all its generations

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Swift eras – Suzuki looks back on four decades of their well-respected Swift models.

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They tell us:

(All words and images from Suzuki).

In the lead up to the introduction of the all-new Swift Hybrid this Spring, Suzuki would like to reflect over the last 40 years of evolution of its highly popular and important global model and provide an insight into its development since 1983.

This evolution and development has provided the engineers at Suzuki Motor Corporation a wealth of experience and knowledge as to what its customers really want from a Hybrid small car and continue to do so in the longer term as well as offer all the technology you need as standard. Suzuki takes the all-new Swift into the next era as the trusted car brand for those who are proud to be different.

Suzuki is renowned as the small car experts and Swift sales recently passed the nine million units milestone since its inception as a globally focused car in 2004.

1983-1989



The 1987 ‘E’ registration car shown above is owned by Suzuki and is a 1.3-litre five-door Executive model with automatic transmission. It is the only one currently road registered and historic status taxed, there are just two other examples known of in the UK so it’s very unlikely you will see another one.

The Suzuki Swift was originally marketed in Japan and sold as the Cultus / SA310 until early 1985 when the Swift name was then used for Europe, and the model launched in the UK. In Japan, the Swift name only became used for its domestic market in the late 1990s. It was first launched in 1983 at the 25th Tokyo Motor Show and went head-to-head with the Toyota Starlet and Nissan Micra. The word “Cultus” is Latin and means care or adoration.

Swift was the first Suzuki model to enter a class of car with both larger dimensions and engines than the ‘kei’ class Fronte model in Japan. Very early models utilised a 1.0-litre three-cylinder engine with leaf springs for the rear suspension.

Later production Swifts were powered by a 1.3-litre four-cylinder engine that was noted by media at the time for its smoothness and good fuel economy. The dashboard was a mix of analogue and digital instruments including a gear selection indicator for the optional three-speed automatic transmission.

In the UK, Swift was offered in both three-door and five-door hatchback forms as well as a 1.3GTi three-door model.

1989-2003



The 1.0-litre GLS model shown above is owned by Suzuki and has covered only 20,000 miles with one owner since 2001.

Introduced in the UK in 1989, this model was the longest running Swift variant with

production spanning over 13 years and was latterly produced in Hungary for the UK market. It was first presented in Japan in 1988 and European introduction debuted in Brussels in October of that same year. This model was also badged as Cultus in Japan and in numerous other Global markets.

This model Swift, with its pronounced wedge styling cues, had similar dimensions to the first model introduced in 1983 but was redesigned to make better use of the luggage area and cabin space. It featured four wheel independent suspension and was available as both three and five door variants with either 1.0-litre three cylinder or 1.3-litre four cylinder engines.

A 1.3-litre GTi three door model was also available with almost 100bhp and four wheel disc brakes and was certainly classed as one of the first hot hatchbacks of the era with its kerb weight of less than 800kg.

The GTi model featured twin overhead camshafts, stronger web casting for the engine block, high flow intake manifold design and electronic control for the ignition timing.

Limited edition UK models were also available including SKY and Forest Green derivatives. On average, Suzuki GB sold around 5,000 units every year of this Swift model and it was a popular hatchback with its high standard specification and low fuel consumption, they are a rare sight on UK roads now with only around 470 examples currently registered.

2005-2010 model



The 1.5-litre GLX five door model shown here is owned by Suzuki and has covered only 50,000 miles with only one owner since 2009.

- Contemporary style, Japanese quality with European-inspired driving dynamics.
- Launched with GL, DDiS and GLX grades with SZ model range replacing it from January 2010.

Launched in the UK in May 2005 and following an 18-month break between end of production of the previous model, Swift was the first product of Suzuki's radical innovation programme to strengthen its position as both a leading compact car manufacturer and one of the world's foremost motorcycle brands. It introduced new ideas and design thinking that went on to define many more new Suzuki models in the years that followed.

Swift is global in outlook and production – at the time it was built in Hungary, Japan and

India – but its development was focused firmly on the demands and tastes of the European market in terms of design and driving characteristics. Indeed, the design team's first step was to establish a base in Europe, where it was able to gain a valuable insight into the European mindset and draw inspiration from the European environment. Much of the chassis' development and refinement was based on real-world intelligence gained through extensive road and track testing across the continent.

The result was an innovative, sporty and elegant design with genuine international appeal. The stylists deliberately shunned the trend towards 'one-box' uniformity, instead producing a substantive design with a distinct bonnet. This generation was available with either 1.3-litre or 1.5-litre four-cylinder engines and the 1.6-litre Sport three door model was introduced in May 2006.

The Sport model had a power output of 125bhp with Monroe Sports damping fitted as standard for even better road handling; it quickly became very popular with both customers and the motoring media.

2010-2017



2016 1.3-litre SZ3 Three door.

- Introduced in the UK in September 2010 with SZ3, SZ4 and SZ5 grades with optional Allgrip 4WD technology.
- At launch, Swift was one of the cleanest petrol engine Superminis on the market with emissions of just 116g/km and only £30 in annual VED charges.
- Seven airbags included as standard across the range.

The Swift was announced as Suzuki's latest world strategic model and made strong developments in styling, impact safety, driving performance, handling, improved fuel consumption and significantly lower emissions.

Extensive use of higher strength steel made the new bodyshell lighter and stiffer as well as offering refinement in underbody design. This latest design also further improved impact

safety for pedestrians as well as occupants.

Increased track and larger diameter wheels with lower profile tyres allowed for even better handling than the highly acclaimed outgoing Swift first launched in May 2005.

The interior design also had a more dynamic feel than before, featuring black as its keynote colour with accents of silver throughout the car. For even more space inside, Swift grew slightly in length (+90mm) with a 50mm increase in wheelbase and 10mm increase in height.

Versus its predecessor, Swift 1.2-litre was even more economical than before with fuel consumption on the combined cycle 56.5mpg for the manual transmission model, an improvement of 7.8mpg over the previous 1.3-litre unit.

Emissions were much lower as well; the 1.2-litre engine with manual transmission produced just 116g/km on the combined cycle; representing a 24g/km or 17 per cent improvement.

The 1.6-litre Sport model with six speed manual transmission was introduced to high acclaim early in 2012. It was available initially as a three door with the five-door model added during 2013. DAB radio and Satellite Navigation were added later in 2014.

2017-2023



2023 1.2-litre SZ-L.

- Swift – on sale in the UK and Republic of Ireland since June 2017, then facelifted for 2021 model year with revised front-end styling, higher standard specification and even further emphasis on safety equipment levels across the range.
- All models fitted with Suzuki's enhanced 12V Hybrid system.
- Available in SZ-L, SZ-T, SZ5 and 1.4-litre Sport grades.

Following on from its launch in the Japanese domestic market, Suzuki Motor Corporation unveiled the Swift for Europe at the 2017 Geneva Motor Show as its all-new global compact supermini. Suzuki launched the Swift in May 2017 in the UK and Ireland with 2WD and Allgrip optional 4WD, it was then facelifted for 2021 with a new 1.2-litre enhanced Hybrid engine as well as further standard safety specification upgrades.

Available as a five door derivative only, The Swift represents an automotive advancement aimed at uplifting the driver through succession, evolution and innovation.

In addition to its stylish exterior design in a compact size of just 3,840mm long, the Swift features excellent visibility, a spacious cabin and ample luggage space. The initial development goal was to create an all new hatchback styling that is undoubtedly Suzuki and with all the technology you need as standard.

Available as standard equipment for all Swift models, the upgraded 12V Hybrid system is a compact and lightweight unit that incorporates an Integrated Starter Generator (known as ISG) which acts as both a generator and starter motor, the ISG is belt driven and assists the engine during vehicle take off and acceleration and also generates electricity through regenerative braking.

The 1.4-litre Sport model with six speed manual transmission was introduced in May 2018 and a 48V Hybrid application for even greater economy and lower emissions was added in 2020.

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