Suzuki Celerio 1.0 SZ3 Dualjet Road Test

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Suzuki’s compact Celerio is a practical and willing five seater companion for any journey…

Kim Henson test drives the Dualjet-powered 1.0 litre version, in SZ3 form.

Suzuki has long excelled at producing small, economical models that are dependable,

inexpensive to run and easy to own.

The five door Celerio is primarily aimed at buyers in need of a city car, and examples sold in Europe are built at Rayong in Thailand. The model made its world debut at the 2014 Delhi Auto Expo (with production for Maruti Suzuki in India being carried out at the Manesar plant), and its European introduction was made at the Geneva Motor Show in March 2015. In fact the car went on sale in the UK a month earlier, in February 2015, with further versions being added to the line-up here during last year.

Clever design provides a 'best in class' spacious interior within compact exterior dimensions, and with an elevated seating position (for the driver this means a better view of the road ahead), also class-leading luggage accommodation (between 254 and 726 litres, or 8.97 and 25.64 cu.ft, depending on how the rear seats/boot space are configured). All this is coupled with eager dynamic performance, while at the same time providing low fuel consumption and emissions.

All Celerios are powered by a three cylinder 1.0 litre petrol engine. For the first models, from launch, Suzuki installed an improved version of the K10B power unit that was already well proven in its Alto and Splash models. However, from April 2015 the new and technically fascinating K10C Dualjet engine was offered; this highly efficient unit is *only* sold in conjunction with the mid-range SZ3 specification; it is this model that forms the subject of this road test.

Standard equipment on all versions, including the entry-level SZ2 model (introduced in the summer of 2015 and priced at £6,999) includes five door, five seater bodywork (by comparison, virtually all competitors of comparable size are four seaters), six airbags (plus a wide range of other built-in safety features), electronic stability control, a tyre pressure monitoring system, and a DAB radio/CD tuner audio system.

For £1,000 more, buyers can opt for the SZ3, which provides them with additional niceties, that include aluminium alloy road wheels, air conditioning, electrically-activated front door

windows, also USB and Bluetooth connectivity. Where the Dualjet engine is specified, the package costs an extra £500 (so the price is £8,499), and this version's equipment incorporates a 'Hill-hold' control to assist with hill starts.

The manual transmission SZ4, priced at £8,999, incorporates electrically-operated door mirrors, plus electric operation for the rear windows (in addition to the fronts), four speakers for the sound system a chromed front grille, front fog lamps and polished aluminium alloy wheels.

Topping the line-up is the SZ4 variant fitted with the Auto Gear Shift (AGS) system (more about this later, under 'Transmissions' heading), and this version is listed at £9,799.

Strong residual values are predicted for used Celerios when three years old, so that buyers investing in new examples now should lose less of their initial outlay compared with some cars, if they decide to sell at that time.

Engine Choices...

Celerios propelled by the tried and tested K10B engine promise excellent fuel consumption, with the official 'Combined' figure being 65.7 miles per gallon. Importantly too, for the environment and for ownership costs, with this power unit CO2 emissions are rated below the critical 100 grams per kilometre road tax threshold, at just 99 grams per kilometre. So the zero rate of road tax is applicable, and that is very good news for owners.

From my own experience with a variety of Suzukis driven in real world motoring conditions, I know that the company's models usually return overall fuel consumption figures very close to the official 'Combined' figures. Therefore I would expect around 60 mpg or better to be a realistic expectation with these K10B powered Celerios in mixed use (and this view is echoed by owner reviews I have seen).

So far, so good, but for those seeking even more impressive figures, Suzuki has another ace up its sleeve. This is available only in conjunction with the mid-range SZ3 specification level,

and takes the form of the firm's fascinating and innovative K10C 'Dualjet' power unit (still a 1.0 litre, three cylinder motor). This will cost buyers an additional £500 compared with the K10B-equipped SZ3, but the extra outlay is likely to be recouped fairly quickly by fuel cost savings…



The Dualjet engine features a raft of technical advances, giving significantly improved efficiency in terms of petrol consumption and emissions.

To start with this engine operates with a higher compression ratio (12.0:1 compared with the K10B's 11.0:1) and provides greater thermal efficiency. It also incorporates friction reduction technology, including roller-rocker type valve lifters (and the motor has variable valve timing too).

A cooled Exhaust Gas Recirculation (EGR) system is employed, together with piston cooling jets, together helping to avoid uncontrolled combustion (known as ‘knock’ or ‘detonation’).

Crucially too, improved combustion efficiency is achieved through the use of bowl-shaped piston crowns, to achieve greater air turbulence within the cylinders, together with a dual petrol injection system, known as ‘Dualjet’.

Under this Dualjet set-up the fuel injectors are located extremely close to the inlet valves (there are revised inlet ports and combustion chambers too), providing finer fuel mixture atomisation and thus improving transfer into the engine’s cylinders.

Helping further minimise fuel consumption and emissions, Suzuki’s Engine Auto Stop Start System (EASS) is also installed on Celerios fitted with the Dualjet engine, temporarily and deliberately stopping the engine when the car halts (in traffic, etc.).

The combined effect of all these measures is a slightly higher torque output (an extra 3 Nm or 2.2 lb.ft.), and, crucially, an official ‘Combined’ fuel consumption figure of 78.4 miles per gallon, with a CO2 emissions rating of just 84 grams per kilometre. According to my calculations, compared with the K10B versions, these last two quoted figures represent improvements of 19.33 per cent (mpg) and 15.15 per cent (CO2 emissions), respectively.

This makes the Dualjet-propelled Celerio the ‘cleanest’ car available for an ‘On The Road’ price under £10,000 (and it’s worth noting that in fact the SZ3 with this motor costs £1,501 less than this, at £8,499!).

Transmissions

Compared with previous Suzuki gearboxes the Celerio’s five speed manual unit has been upgraded, with improvements being made to the synchromesh and gearchange quality, and lower friction bearings have been adopted. It is said that as a result, torque loss has been reduced by 40 per cent, thereby improving efficiency.

An option on SZ4 versions is Suzuki's 'Auto Gear Shift' (AGS) transmission. Priced at £800 more than an equivalent Celerio with a manual gearbox, this variant provides the driver with effortless driving in traffic, and the system returns petrol consumption and emissions figures identical to those of the manual models.

The fuel-efficient Auto Gear Shift transmission was developed in conjunction with Marelli, and employs an electro-hydraulic unit that automatically activates the gearchange mechanism. The gear actuator and gearchange controller are integrated together, the assembly being termed an 'Intelligent Shift Control Actuator'.

This transmission features a manual mode (providing a more 'direct' feel when required), plus a 'creep' function (giving about 5 mph and handy in heavy traffic, also when parking, with no need to activate the accelerator pedal).

So, What is the Celerio Really Like?

Although the Celerio is hailed as a 'city' car, to me, in all respects, it has the feel and interior space more usually associated with larger models. For a start, it features five doors, and the four passenger doors are all wide-opening, providing easy access to (and exit from) a smart, comfortable interior that provides generous head and leg room for up to five adults to travel in comfort (and with a head restraint for each of the five seats). This amount of space is not usually found in typical 'city' cars!





While the interior cannot be classed as ‘luxurious’, on the SZ3 version as tested it was well-finished, attractive and practical in nature. During my test of this model, I and my passengers found the seats accommodating and comfortable, including on long trips. The relatively high seating position within the car’s body was welcome too, helping to provide good visibility of the road. Visibility to the rear was also impressive – and far better than is the case with some other small modern cars.





The test car was equipped with a wide range of useful and reassuring standard-fit safety systems, including (among many others) front, side and curtain airbags, an Electronic Stability Program (ESP), LED daytime running lamps and ‘Hill Hold’ control, to prevent the car from running backwards when starting from standstill on gradients.

Practical features abounded too, incuding height-adjustment for the driver’s seat and for the front seat belts, a tilt-adjustable steering wheel, a multi-function ‘trip’ computer (which I found easy to use), a gearchange indicator (to help ensure optimum fuel consumption), manual air conditioning, five cup holders, front and rear door storage compartments, a DAB radio/CD tuner (thank you Suzuki; I can still play all my own music collection aboard a Celerio!), a USB socket and Bluetooth connectivity. I was pleased to discover that the stereo system incorporates a graphic equaliser function, providing choices in sound emphasis between ‘Jazz’, ‘Rock’, ‘Pop’, ‘Classic’ and ‘Hip-Hop’, as well as bass, treble and balance

controls.

A small point but the front door bins are quite narrow, and both incorporate a reinforcing lip along their outer edges, so we found that items such as maps, books, etc, could become ‘caught’ beneath the lip as you lift them out; care is needed to avoid damaging such items. The rear door bins are also narrow (and shorter than the fronts) but each one incorporates a bottle holder.







Further storage compartments are provided within the vehicle, including the lidded but not-lockable front glove box (which houses the very comprehensive vehicle handbook), plus smaller containers – respectively just ahead of the gear lever, and just behind the handbrake lever (which is of the conventional, manually-operated type which I prefer).

With this trim level (SZ3) the car comes with just two loudspeakers (in the front) for the stereo system. In addition the rear view door mirrors have to be adjusted manually, and the rear door windows have manual winders, but that’s no hardship, in my opinion. If you prefer four speakers, electrically-operated door mirrors and electrically-controlled rear door windows, you would need to opt for the higher grade SZ4 trim level – but then you couldn’t

have the Dualjet engine; so you pays yer money and takes yer choice!



The car's neat good looks were complemented by stylish aluminium alloy road wheels, which as a welcome bonus I found very quick and easy to clean when hand-washing the car. While talking of wheels, our test vehicle came with a get-you-home (you hope!) tyre 'inflation' kit; personally I would prefer a spare wheel…

Even with all three rear seats in use, boot space is generous for a compact car, and benefits from the incorporation of a two thirds:one-third divided/folding rear seat back, with the folded sections of the seat back sitting near-level with the main boot floor (beneath which lives the tyre inflation kit just mentioned).





The luggage compartment is easily-accessed too, incorporating a tailgate that opens high from bumper level, so that loading and unloading is straightforward.

Driving

The Dualjet motor in our test car was a smooth-running and willing performer, pulling particularly strongly from around 1,800 rpm and upwards (for the record, maximum torque/pulling power is developed at 3,500 rpm).

Yes, from the engine note at low speeds I could detect that there was a three cylinder unit working away under the bonnet, but its distinctive sound was not intrusive and the car was

not noisy. In fact, I felt that it was a refined and competent cruiser on the open road, as well as being a nippy, easy vehicle to drive in urban conditions. It also proved to be very easy to park and to manoeuvre in congested town environments.


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Buyers in search of scintillating sports car performance would probably consider models other than a Celerio, BUT for all normal road use, over both short and long distances, this eager Suzuki performs admirably. I found that it provided willing acceleration, from standstill and on the move, and the delightfully slick-changing five speed gearbox, with well-chosen ratios, helped to make the car enjoyable to drive both in town traffic and on the open road.

Indeed this car is perfectly capable of undertaking long trips at high cruising speeds, and with up to five people and their luggage aboard. With a claimed top speed of 96 mph the car is cruising comfortably and quietly at the 70 mph dual carriageway/motorway speed limit, and during an extended run through twisting lanes in Devon, it was quite happy romping up and down steep gradients too.

The car felt safe and predictable when cornering – indeed it was fun to drive, with positive, reassuring braking too.

Another aspect with which I was impressed was the comfortable, well-damped ride quality; over deeply-potholed surfaces in country roads as well as more gentle undulations, the car rode smoothly and its composure was not disturbed by encountering a rutted surface on a bend.

Frugal on Fuel?

After 370 miles of varied driving conditions on public roads, our test Celerio's on-board trip computer display showed that we had achieved an overall consumption figure of 62.7 miles per gallon. This included a fair bit of in-town motoring as well as country driving and fast cruising.

I should mention that in an earlier test drive of a similar model, mostly through country districts rather than in urban situations, it achieved 73.6 miles per gallon, which is very close to the official 'Combined' figure of 78.4 mpg.

In real-world mixed use, I feel that overall figures of around 65 mpg or better are easily attainable.

VERDICT

Superb. I speak as I find and this fun-to-drive Suzuki seemed happy in its work during my time with it, and willing to please.

Having previously undertaken two briefer test runs in Celerios, I was interested to find out what the model would be like to live with during a week's everyday use (always a better yardstick, I have found)…

My opinion of the model was not changed by this longer acquaintance and I was not disappointed. I feel that Celerios are roomy (especially for their class), comfortable, well-engineered, miserly on fuel (especially the Dualjet version, as tested) and relatively affordable – definitely good value for your money. They are also quite capable of providing excellent service on long trips, as well as in town use.

Would I buy one? Yes indeed.



(One comment, rather than a criticism… Personally I am surprised that the excellent Dualjet engine is only offered in conjunction with the SZ3 specification level).

WHEELS-ALIVE TECH. SPEC. IN BRIEF

Suzuki Celerio 1.0 SZ3 Dualjet

Engine: 998cc three cylinder, chain-driven twin overhead camshaft, 12 valve

Power: 68 bhp at 6,000 rpm

Torque: 93 Nm (68.6 lb.ft) @ 3,500 rpm

Transmission: Five speed manual gearbox; front wheel drive

0-62 mph: 13.0 sec.

Top speed: 96 mph.

Fuel consumption, 'Official' figures:

('Urban'): 68.9 mpg.

('Extra Urban'): 83.0 mpg.

('Combined'): 78.4 mpg.

Fuel consumption, achieved on this test: 62.7 mpg overall.

CO2 emissions: 84 g/km.

Road tax: Vehicle Excise Duty Band A, Rate £Nil per year.

Insurance Group: 7E.

Dimensions:

Length 3,600 mm (11.81ft), Width 1600 mm (5.25 ft), Height 1530 mm (5.02 ft).

Luggage capacity: 254 to 726 litres (8.97 to 25.64 cu.ft).

‘On the road’ price: £8,499.