Suzuki Jimny – Road Test

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THE SMALL BUT MIGHTY SUZUKI JIMNY SZ5 ALLGRIP…

…Test-driven by Robin Roberts (and Miles Better News Agency).

Every manufacturer loves to cram features into their model to make as much money as possible, but the Suzuki Jimny has something few ever include, a free smile.

The standard-spec smile is something so many modern cars lack but the simple Suzuki has it in spades. And then some.

The original Suzuki Jimny dates from 1970 and the Light Jeep 10 which was remarkable for its abilities against much more powerful 4×4 rivals, but it was the SJ series which really won the hearts of Europeans and UK buyers in the 1980s and for the best part of three decades afterwards. In that time it appeared as a three door with soft and hard tops and even pick-up styles. They were small on cost and big on ability.

The fourth generation arrived in the UK last year but it could be a short visit as EU emissions legislation is threatening the model and despite the fact thousands have been ordered they could become the most collectable of all and I certainly would consider as a future classic.

The Jimny range now comprises six models using 85 hp 1.3 or 101 hp 1.5 litre petrol engines, with a choice of five-speed manual or four-speed automatic transmissions, selectable two or four wheel drive, with cloth or plastic synthetic leather covered seats, from about £13,000 to £19,500.



Our near top of range model with the bigger engine and manual gearbox is possibly the best all-rounder. It never failed to make me or passengers smile when we approached, climbed in and started up.

It was quick to start, sounded busy even idling, and was quick from a standing start up to about 25 mph, but the modest pulling power meant frequent gearchanges to keep up with traffic.

That was no hardship because the light and progressive clutch was matched with a slick and direct five-speed gearbox. The two-four-wheel drive mode lever was just behind it on the central console and could be used on the go so momentum was maintained and boggy ground was pushed away under the wheels rather than allowed to drag it to a stop.



The busy engine note became more irritating at motorway speed and we settled for a steady 60 mph pace on two long journeys which also had the benefit of stretching fuel economy towards 45 mpg.

While it’s not quick through the gears a high driving position and low waistline meant we could see and anticipate traffic conditions and make the most of that to overtake or slow down as necessary, and keep our fuel figure over 40mpg overall.

The engine has a modest pulling power but it will tow a small trailer and with the right gear in hand the Suzuki Jimny is a very capable car off road as well as on. Just read the

conditions and let the Jimny do what it needs. That's easy because the short 2.25 m (7.38 ft) wheelbase makes it agile in confined spaces both in town or off-road on tight tracks, lanes or woodland.

There's useful ground clearance for rougher terrain and essentials are high out of the way of dangerous contact. The springs cope well but their firmness gives a stiff or choppy ride at times on tarmac surfaces and it can crash over consecutive bumps or ridges.

Body roll is modest and the Jimny really hangs onto the road, especially if in all-wheel-drive mode, so there are no scary moments when cornering and it was fairly stable in strong cross winds.

The three-door body gives excellent front seat access, but it's more of a twist and tuck into the back two seats and the luggage space behind is very small with a helpful compartment beneath and rear seat-backs which can be partly reclined. We found headroom was good throughout while legroom was on the short side and very short in the back. The seats were cloth covered in our car, well shaped and reasonably supportive with modest adjustment range for driver and passenger.

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Behind the wheel everything was a 'cosy' fit for the driver, all secondary switches on the wheelspokes or column were clearly marked and sensibly positioned and those on the fascia were close if sometimes not so easy to see.

Essential gauges were in front of the driver, a good size and clear if simply marked while the central infotainment screen atop the fascia was also quickly read. The Suzuki Jimny software supports Apple and Android mobile phones and the navigation screen is basic but good.

Heating and ventilation was very effective in the small cabin with strong output to the front footwells and side windows, backed up by powered front windows. Lights were reasonable

but not long-sighted and the wipers were effective if on the small side. You also learn to look around the back-door mounted spare wheel.

Oddments room was very small with many compartments but of restricted size and I think many items would have to live on the back seat or in the rear footwells, or the loadbed base.

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The Jimny's noise levels were modest once you excluded that of the busy engine. Wind wuffle was surprisingly low considering the squared outline of the car and even road noise was not particularly loud, except when it struck some potholes or ridges.

VERDICT

So there is nothing really seriously wrong with Suzuki Jimny 1.5 SZ5 Allgrip but a lot of things which are just right and it's one of the most characterful cars on sale today with an ability which belies its size and price. While it has practical family car limits, it has no limits when it comes to making a driver smile.

For: Eye-catching looks, agile and economical, very capable off-road, good turning circle.

Against: Very small boot, choppy ride, modest acceleration, noisy at high revs with just five forward gears and restricted legroom particularly in the back, high emissions and tax costs, ungenerous warranty.

Kim adds: "Having road-tested (for a week last year) and thoroughly enjoyed a Jimny, I echo Robin's comments about this Suzuki being a future classic. In fact I think it's already there – a classic in its own time, and with so much character!".



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

Suzuki Jimny SZ5 Allgrip.

Price: £19,399 including £650 dual tone paint.

Mechanical: 101 hp, 1,462cc, four cylinder petrol engine, 2/4WD.

Performance: 90 mph, 0–62 mph 12 seconds, 42 mpg on test, CO2 154 g/km.

Tax costs: VED First Year road tax £515 then £145 Standard rate, BiK company car tax 34%.

Insurance Group: 14D.

Warranty: Three years/60,000 miles.

Sizes: L 3.65 m (11.98 ft), W 1.65 m (5.41 ft), H 1.73 m (5.68 ft), boot space: 85 – 830 litres (3.00 – 29.31 cu.ft), three doors/four seats.