Suzuki Swift 1.3 DDiS

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GENUINELY INEXPENSIVE TO RUN?



The latest incarnation of the Suzuki Swift looks smart, dynamic and capable. Our test car was a top specification SZ4 version.

These days, cars offering true economy of operation are much in demand, so how does Suzuki's diesel-powered Swift 'supermini'

shape up? Kim Henson evaluates the model over 1,100 miles.

The first Suzuki that I had the pleasure of driving was a three cylinder Alto, way back in the summer of 1981. This compact five door hatchback impressed with its clever design, willing petrol engine and impressive fuel consumption – at that time, achieving around 50 mpg in everyday motoring was good for any car.

Fast forward 32 years, and Suzuki is still known – and has an enviable reputation – for producing effective, economical and practical small cars.

Launched in Britain late in 2010, the Swift 'supermini' was mildly updated (with revised styling touches affecting, for example, the front bumper and grille, plus a new LED type high level brake lamp) in the summer of 2013. Notably the model line-up now includes Sport and four wheel drive five door versions.

The Swift is not the smallest model in Suzuki's line-up, but nevertheless is relatively short, with compact overall dimensions, yet offering far more interior space than might be imagined.

Trim levels range from SZ2 to SZ4, and there's a choice for buyers between a 94 PS Dual VVT petrol engine (claimed to be one of the most powerful in its market segment, yet returning a 'Combined' mpg figure of 56.5), and a Fiat-derived 1.3 litre turbo diesel engine, now offered in five door SZ4 guise (as tested); this model replaces the previous SZ3.

Compared with earlier cars, the latest version of this diesel engine offers reduced CO2 emissions of 101g/km (resulting in an annual road tax bill of just £20), and improved fuel consumption – better by seven per cent on the official 'Combined' cycle, and now giving 72.4 mpg.

Specification levels are good, across the range, and the top line SZ4 is particularly well-equipped. Among other goodies, examples of 'factory' fittings on this version include automatic air conditioning, cruise control, automatically activated headlamps, daytime

running lamps, power folding mirrors incorporating additional turn indicator lamps, a push-button keyless start facility, electrically operated rear windows and rear privacy glass.

It should also be mentioned that the Swift has achieved a EuroNCAP safety rating of five stars (the maximum number possible). Extensive use has been made in the body shell of high strength steel, for optimum stiffness, yet light weight.

INSIDE STORY

The five door body shell in the SZ4 I sampled provides good head and leg room for front seat occupants, and generous head room in the rear. With the front seats set towards the rearmost positions on their runners, rear seat leg room is rather restricted.

The seats in the test vehicle proved to be comfortable over very long distances.



The rear seat will take three adults, for whom head room is generous. However, leg room is restricted when the front seats are set towards their rearmost positions (as can be seen here in the case of the passenger seat).



The Swift has generously-proportioned, wrap-around front seats; they are comfortable over both short and long distances.

In addition to the main interior lamp in the centre of the roof, map reading lights are installed above the windscreen; we made good use of these in the Welsh hills!

Boot space is good, and the split folding facility for the rear seat back (1/3:2/3) enables a range of people/luggage carrying compromises to be attained. However, the seat backs don’t fold completely flat to the floor.



The luggage compartment isn’t huge (and the load sill is quite high), but boot space can be

extended by folding forwards the seat backrests, which then sit just above the ‘flat floor’ level.



The ‘space saver’ spare wheel lives in its own compartment beneath the main floor of the boot.

A bag hook is provided on the right hand side of the boot, and there are two ‘top tether’ points built-in, for a child seat.

The ‘space saver’ type spare wheel is housed in its own compartment beneath the boot floor.

Push-buttons – a large one to open, and a smaller one to lock the boot, are provided in the lower edge of the tailgate.

ON THE ROAD



Smooth-running, torquey, lively and economical. The 1.3 litre diesel engine is a ‘state of the art’ unit that ticks all the boxes for everyday motoring in the 21st Century.

Under the bonnet of the test vehicle was the Fiat-derived 1.3 litre turbo diesel engine (driving the front wheels through a five speed gearbox). This eager power unit develops 75PS, and enables the Swift to accelerate from rest to 62 mph in under 13 seconds, and on to a top speed of 101 mph where legalities permit.

In real life use it proved to be a willing and frugal performer; furthermore it was particularly smooth-running. Accelerating through the gears was reasonably rapid, and pleasant, courtesy of the easy-changing gearbox. Cruising at high road speeds was relaxing, thanks in part to the relatively high overall gearing. In top gear at 60 mph, just 2,000 rpm were required. At 70 mph on the motorway the car felt refined and was quiet.

Just as important, and one of the very good aspects of driving this Swift, is the manner in which the engine pulls so strongly at low speeds. From around 1,500 rpm the very torquey engine (which develops its maximum pulling power at just 1,750 rpm) pulls strongly, helping to reduce the need for gear changing in heavy traffic, and aiding hill-climbing too.



Yes, that's confirmation of a genuine 66.2 miles per gallon over 1,060 miles of mixed everyday 'real world' driving – including some hard use in the Welsh mountains.

It is not often that cars I road test achieve anywhere near the 'official' combined mileage per gallon consumption figures. However, in this case, the overall figure I managed, over almost 1,100 miles, was 66.2 miles per gallon. This included city running, long-distance cruising and some challenging 'gear' work over many miles on twisting, and sometime mountainous, country routes. I feel this was a very creditable figure (especially as it included several journeys in which the engine was working hard, in hilly/mountainous districts) and came close to Suzuki's 'Combined' figure of 72.4 mpg. Well done Suzuki; with a low rate of road tax (£20 per year) and excellent economy figures, this is a genuinely economical car to run. It's worth noting too that, even in town use, this car promises around 55 to 60 miles per gallon.

The suspension – MacPherson struts plus coil springs at the front, and with a torsion

beam/coil spring set-up at the rear – provided a comfortable ride during my time with the car, yet when the car was cornered enthusiastically, body roll angles were minimal.

I found that the car handled well and was fun to drive.

The steering – with variable ratio power-assistance – felt direct and very positive in action.

The brake system on the SZ4 test car included ventilated front discs, with solid discs at the rear. In operation the brakes were smooth-acting and felt safe at all times, without being over-done in the servo department.

GOOD POINTS

The following two aspects are relatively minor points, but to me they underline the thought that has gone into the design of this model…

One aspect of this Suzuki that I particularly liked was the adoption of highly efficient six-jet screen washers, providing excellent coverage and clearance of the windscreen, even in muddy road conditions.

I was also impressed by the useful highlighting of 10 mph increments on the speedometer, which as a consequence is very easy to read at a glance, at any speed.
Another small, but helpful, point to mention, is that a lamp in the CD player front panel indicates unmistakably if a CD is already in the machine; brilliant!

MINUS POINTS

Only two of note…

First, the lack of rain gutters along the sides of the roof undoubtedly help the ‘clean’ looks of the Swift. However, as I discovered during our time with the car, if the car is parked during rainy conditions on a slope with one side of the vehicle higher than the other, when a

door on the higher side of the vehicle is opened, water will enter the car in some quantity, dripping onto the seat and floor (also onto the knees of a rear seat occupant on that side of the car!).

The other thing is that the luggage accommodation could do with being a bit more spacious. It's true of course that the car is relatively short, but even with just two people aboard there is insufficient room for a week's holiday luggage within the boot, unless the split folding rear seat facility is activated. With a full complement of passengers, luggage really does need to be 'rationed'!

WHEELS-ALIVE COMMENTS:



Among many other useful features, the SZ4 has daytime running lamps fitted as standard.



The aluminium alloy wheels on the SZ4 test car look great, but the intricate spokes require a patient approach when cleaning them!



Highly visible rear lamp clusters can be seen easily

from the side of the car as well as from the rear; a good safety feature.

VERDICT

A highly likeable, capable, economical supermini that performs well and is genuinely enjoyable to drive, yet it sips fuel and costs little to keep on the road. Speaking personally I just wish it had a bit more boot space!

A WELSH TOUR… While road-testing this Swift, the car was used for an enjoyable tour in north and mid Wales. To discover where the Suzuki took us, and how the car coped, please see our ‘Motoring for Fun’ feature on this trip, by clicking HERE.



The Swift’s smooth bodywork makes it easy to clean when required.

WHEELS-ALIVE TECH. SPEC. IN BRIEF

Suzuki Swift 1.3 litre DDiS five door SZ4
Drivetrain: Front engine, front wheel drive
Engine: 1248cc overhead camshaft, 16 valve four cylinder direct injection turbo diesel
Power: 75 PS @ 4,000 rpm
Torque: 190Nm (140 lb.ft.) @ 1,750 rpm
0–62 mph: 12.75 seconds
Top speed: 101 mph
Fuel consumption, 'official' figures:
'Urban': 60.1 mpg
'Extra urban': 83.0 mpg
'Combined': 72.4 mpg
Actual figure achieved during our road test: 66.2 mpg over 1,060 miles.

PRICE ('On The Road'):
1.3 litre DDiS five door SZ4 £15,139

Warranty: Three years/60,000 miles; one year AA/Suzuki Assistance; 12 year 'perforation' warranty.