Suzuki Vitara 1.0 Boosterjet SZ-T – Road Test

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Kim Henson test drives the latest version of the 1.0 litre three cylinder Vitara…

(All words and photographs by Kim).

The Vitara has been a popular Suzuki model for more than 30 years since the original was launched, and the previous generation SUV (which made its debut in 2015) continues the trend in being a well-respected vehicle.

The latest 2019 versions – all built at Magyar in Hungary, and described by Suzuki as ‘crossovers with SUV styling’ – have continued the sales appeal of their predecessors, and feature enhanced safety technology and equipment, revised suspension and styling plus new

engine choices.

Buyers can choose between two of Suzuki's Euro 6 rated 'Boosterjet' turbocharged petrol engines; either a three cylinder 1.0 litre unit, developing 111 PS, or a four cylinder 1.4 litre motor, producing 140 PS. (That's said to be 17 per cent more than in the previous 1.6 litre model, and there's also greater torque available over a wider rev band; 220 Nm or 162 lb.ft, all the way from 1,500 to 4,000 rpm).

Three trim levels are offered; SZ4, SZ-T and SZ5. The price starting point is £16,999 for the 1.0 litre Boosterjet model, in SZ4 guise, while SZ-T versions begin at £18,999, and SZ5 variants cost from £22,499.

Across all versions in the Vitara line-up, helping to minimise emissions and fuel consumption are the application of weight-saving measures (including the use of high tensile steel) in the bodywork, plus Suzuki's Engine Auto Stop Start system.

It is also worth noting that, by contrast with many all wheel drive systems from other manufacturers, the ALLGRIP 'Select' four wheel drive system has only a minimal effect on performance and emissions.



ON TEST

Our test vehicle was the SZ-T version, with ALLGRIP Select four wheel drive. As explained below, the ‘on the road’ price of our vehicle is £21,599.

It is worth noting that although the SZ-T starting point list price is £18,999, there is only one paint finish available at this figure – ‘Superior White’, which is a solid colour.

There are four optional metallic paint finishes, each of which costs an extra £500, and six two tone paint arrangements, each priced at £800 over the base price of the vehicle.

Six speed automatic transmission adds £1,350 to the price, if specified in place of the five speed manual gearbox.

For buyers wishing to specify the impressive four mode ALLGRIP Select four wheel drive system, in conjunction with manual transmission only, the extra cost is £1,800.

So the ‘on the road’ price for our test car is £18,999 plus £800 for the paint scheme and £1,800 for the four wheel drive system, making £21,599 in total.

WELL-EQUIPPED

Standard equipment on our SZ-T test car includes a huge range of safety systems/features; in fact there are more than 20 listed on the specification sheet for this vehicle. Notable examples among them are: ABS with Electronic Brake Distribution (EBD) and Brake Assist, dual sensor brake support, ESP stability control system, seven airbags, lane departure warning/prevention, blind spot monitor and rear cross traffic alert, also ‘hill hold’ control.



In addition, our car was fitted with 17 inch painted finish aluminium alloy road wheels, a chromed front grille, roof rails, satellite navigation, cruise control/speed limiter set-up, rear privacy glass, a rear parking camera and an engine auto stop start system, also a quad speaker DAB audio system, Bluetooth connectivity, smartphone linkage display audio and an automatic air conditioning system. Among further niceties there's height adjustment for the driver's and front passenger's seats, a tilt/telescopically adjustable steering wheel (leather-covered), electrically operated windows front and rear, a four speaker audio system, and a removable 'double height' floor for the boot (as well as 60:40 split folding rear seats).

Unfortunately the car does not come as standard with a spare wheel, but instead a tyre repair kit is provided for emergency use. A 'space saver' spare wheel kit is optionally

availabe at extra cost, complete with jack and associated holder etc.

REALITIES

On our test vehicle I was at once impressed by the wide-opening doors that provide easy access to all five seats, and for two rear seat occupants there is generous head and leg room (this also applies to people in the front of the car). However, if a third adult is carried in the centre seat of the three in the rear, we found that for that person, foot/leg room is restricted by the intrusion into the rear passenger compartment of the rear end of the large storage compartment forming part of the centre console set-up.

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Storage compartments abound, with generous door pockets (incorporating bottle holders), a lidded glovebox and twin trays/cup holders within the centre console, plus an elasticated pocket built into the rear of the front passenger seat, as well as the large storage box already mentioned.

The luggage area is roomy, with the tailgate opening from bumper level to provide access to the flat-floored and sensibly-shaped compartment. The twin floors usefully allow the storage of additional items in the shallow but roomy space beneath the main floor panel, and on either side of the boot are extra handy ‘sunken’ compartments; ideal for carrying smaller items that are thus held in place rather than sliding around .

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The welcoming interior looks and feels well put together, and my co-pilot and I found that the accommodating front seats were very comfortable on long drives.

The turbocharged three cylinder 1.0 litre engine was a strong performer, especially considering its size, and acceleration both from rest and on the move (for example when overtaking) was impressive.



I found that it was a quiet-running, refined unit, especially when cruising. At 70 mph the tacho needle on our test car was registering 2,800 rpm.

The motor was also endowed with good low speed pulling power, with maximum torque (170 Nm or 125 lb.ft) available all the way from 2,000 to 3,500 rpm.

It was evident too that the car was very happy to maintain 70 mph in top (fifth) gear when climbing long gradients on motorways/fast dual carriageways.

The gearbox was a sweet-changing unit too, and the clutch action was light, helping to make easier stop-start driving in heavy traffic.

I found the rotary ‘Select’ control for the all wheel drive system to be simple to operate and it provides the driver with a ‘Snow’ mode for increased traction, also a ‘Sport’ setting which made the car feel more eager. However, during my road test I was unable to find any snow (thankfully, as it was in June!) and for almost all my driving I left the drive mode control in its standard ‘Auto’ setting. However for country dwellers in particular, the four wheel drive system does provide increased grip and peace of mind for drivers.



During my time with the car all occupants spoke highly of the comfortable ride quality, and the car felt composed when encountering bumpy sections of road surface.

Handling, roadholding and braking aspects all felt well-sorted and the steering assistance was spot-on for me, with low effort required at the wheel when parking and coping with

other low speed manouvres, yet at speed on the open road the steering felt positive and secure.

I liked the fact that the test vehicle had a conventional, manually-operated handbrake lever, and the handbrake easily held the car on steep slopes.

ECONOMICAL?

The recent change in working out the ‘official’ figures from the previous ‘NEDC’ system to the now-required and supposedly more realistic ‘WLTP’ methodology has meant that the ‘Combined’ figures quoted by Suzuki for this Vitara have necessarily worsened from 49.5 miles per gallon to 39.4. In fact, over the 402 miles that I covered during my week with our test car, driving normally and including town running, long distance runs and twisting country lanes, the on-board computer indicated an average of 46.3 mpg; well ahead of the latest ‘official’ figure.

I liked the set-up of the computer display on the dash; instantaneous fuel consumption can be viewed at the same time as the average figure (calculated since the last computer/trip meter re-set); in addition the system indicates to the driver the available mileage remaining on the fuel in the tank, plus the optimum gearchange points for optimum fuel saving.



VERDICT

A well-engineered, likeable family vehicle which performs well, is very comfortable (although, as mentioned, leg room is restricted for an adult sitting in the centre of the rear seat) and competent on the road, provides practical luggage-carrying options and is economical on fuel.



WHEELS-ALIVE TECH. SPEC IN BRIEF:

Suzuki Vitara 1.0 Boosterjet SZ-T

Engine: Euro 6 compliant three cylinder, 1.0 litre (998cc), Boosterjet direct fuel injection petrol.

Transmission: Six speed manual gearbox, ALLGRIP four wheel drive.

Power: 111 PS @5,500 rpm.

Torque: 170 Nm (125 lb.ft) @ 2,000 to 3,500 rpm.

Performance:

0-62 mph: 12.0 seconds.

Top speed: 111 mph.

Fuel consumption (‘Official’ figures):

New WLTP figure: Combined, 39.4 mpg.

On test, over 402 miles, average 46.3 mpg.

Fuel tank capacity: 47 litres (10.34 imperial gallons).

Theoretical range on a full tank at our actual achieved mpg figure: Approximately 478 miles.

CO2 Emissions: 162 g/km (new WLTP figure).

Taxation: VED: First year, £530; After first year, £145. BiK company car tax 36%.

Insurance Group: 25D.

Warranty: Three years/60,000 miles.

Dimensions: Length 4,175 mm (13.70 ft); Width 1,775 mm (5.82 ft), Height 1,610 mm (5.28 ft), Wheelbase 2,500 mm (8.20 ft). Luggage capacity 375 to 710 litres (13.24 to 25.07 cu.ft).

Price (‘On the Road’): £20,799, plus Galactic grey/black roof paintwork £800, making a total of £21,599.