



Suzuki SX4 S-Cross Camouflage

Car review | Compact SUVs are very popular. The marketing divisions of most brands do everything they can to grab your attention. And all the compact SUVs look so attractive that it is hard to resist. Then there is Suzuki, which quietly introduces the all-new SX4. What does this modest SUV from Suzuki have to offer?

The all-new Suzuki SX4 looks good, but doesn't make the car buyer greedy like the competing models do. Instead, it's the facts and figures that make the SX4 stand out. Its modest design almost hides the fact that the SX4 is larger than most other cars in its price range. The SX4 is smaller than a mid-size SUV (Sports Utility Vehicle) yet larger than a compact SUV.



special. To distinguish from the mass, a special design is almost a requirement. Again, it's only when judging the SX4 from a rational point of view that the car does impress; there's ample space in the front and the seats are placed so far apart that the SX4 does feel like a larger car.

Legroom in the rear is fine. However, the large panoramic sunroof affects headroom. Still, this glass roof is recommendable since it is the only one that can actually be opened. One glass panel slides above the metal roof while the other slides under. Very clever! And... it adds to the feeling of freedom and spaciousness.

Room to move

The cabin doesn't impress either: inside the SX4 looks just like every other Suzuki. There's nothing wrong with that, except that a car like this is bought to be



The boot measures 430 litres and that's a bit larger than average (and even bigger than that of the Suzuki Vitara!). The SX4 isn't an innovative car. All cabin space is used effectively, but there are no ergonomic highlights or smart space savers like the competition offers. According to Suzuki it wants to offer as much space as possible for as little money as possible and that means there's no room for thrills.

Handling

The ample space makes for a good first impression. It's the SX4's handling that charms as how the eye-popping looks of the competition does. Thanks to a strong yet lightweight construction, the SX4 handles like a compact hatchback! Steering is very direct for an SUV, which may take some getting used to.



The driver never has the feeling of operating a large or heavy vehicle. Even better: the SX4 handles like Suzuki's fun car: the Swift! Even when the SX4 is abused by rough handling, fast cornering or plain foolishness, the car handles flawlessly.

Yet, one thing really affects the drive: depending on the posture of the driver, the A-pillar (the beam between the windscreen and the first side window) may affect visibility. In city traffic the test driver repeatedly had to look left and right around the A-pillar to make sure a road was really clear. The previous SX4 suffered from the same problem, so it is a shame Suzuki didn't learn from this mistake the first time.



AllGrip

The basic model transfers the power from the engine to the front wheels. When opting for "AllGrip" the SX4 will power all four wheels. AllGrip is a variable system: the rear wheels only help out when necessary. In this way no energy is wasted and fuel will be saved.



With a push of a button the driver can choose snow-mode (maximum traction) or off-road mode (permanent four-wheel drive). Because of the large overhang in the front and back, as well as the mediocre ground clearance, the SX4 certainly isn't an off-roader. In mud or sand the four-wheel drive system (loosely based on that of the Suzuki Vitara) did manage to free the car.

Finally, there's a sport-mode. It makes the reaction of the throttle more fierce while the electronic stability programme ("ESP") gives a bit more leeway.



Engine

For now, the SX4 is available with a choice of two engines: a 1.6 litre diesel and a 1.6 litre petrol engine. Both deliver 120 PS, yet they do differ in character.

With the petrol engine Suzuki makes a very clear choice. A car can't be quick and frugal at the same time, just like it cannot be small yet spacious. To make it easy to drive efficiently, the petrol engine has a very modest disposition.

The SX4 has no problem keeping up with traffic and therefore never feels underpowered or slow. However, when asking more, the engine makes more noise while performance hardly improves. Only when the pedal is firmly pushed to the metal, does the SX4 perform. With a calm driving style the engine never protests, not even at very low revs.



This is why the SX4 makes it very easy to drive economically. Even on a highly demanding test route with twisty mountain roads, city traffic an Italian autostrada (there is a speed limit, but everybody ignores it) and an off-road test the SX4 still was as frugal as the brochure promised!

Diesel

The SX4 diesel also did what it said on the tin, but with more ease. By nature a diesel engine is more torque strong than a petrol engine (320 Nm instead of 156 Nm) and it shows.

In real life that translates into more convincing acceleration and more ease at high speeds. And... the diesel engine allows for even lower engine speeds making it more relaxing to drive. Therefore, the SX4 "DDiS" delivers the mighty feeling that suits this mighty fine Suzuki.



Conclusion

Buying an SUV is a way to be different from others, without compromising on space or practical use. Compact SUVs are very popular, so many brands offer such a car. While the Suzuki SX4 looks fine, it won't win the hearts of the buyers by its pretty face alone. The SX4 lacks charisma or a strong personality.

On the other hand: the SX4 is larger (read: roomier) than most other cars in its price range. And once behind the steering wheel the SX4 does convince, because it is so frugal and handles so beautifully that this new SUV is like a blessing in disguise. ■



Specifications

Suzuki SX4 S-Cross 1.6 SZ5 AllGrip CVT

Size and weight



Length x width x height	430 x 177 x 158 cm
Wheelbase	260 cm
Kerb weight	1.165 kg
Trailer	420 kg
Trailer - braked	1.200 kg
Fuel capacity	50 l
Luggage space	430/ l
Tyre size	205/60R16

Engine and performance



Capacity	1586 cc
Cylinders / valves	4/4
Max power	120 PS @ 6000 rpm
Max torque	156 Nm @ 4400 rpm
Drive	four wheel drive
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	13.5 secs
Top speed	165 km/h
Average mileage	5.7 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	6.8 l / 100 km
Mileage extra urban	5 l / 100 km
CO2 emissions	130 gr / km

Price

Price	Â£ 22,949
Price base model	Â£ 13,999