



Suzuki Swift (2005 - 2010)

A New Playmate

Car review | For nearly twenty years it was in production and then everything went quiet. But now the Suzuki Swift is back. And how? At last after presenting many different research models, Suzuki has come with a totally modernised new generation Swift that has a hip, carefree style. "Wanna play?" cajolingly it teases. Autozine wanted to play and so off it ambled to the pleasure playground of Monte Carlo to get its teeth into the new Swift.

In comparison to the various concept cars, the production model is much more modest. The wheel housing is not as chunky; in fact all the extremities have been slimmed down to more manageable proportions. Although it is no longer revolutionary, the little red test car is one and all speed and pleasure.

Engines

The amount of pleasure is dependant on the engine and equipment. Since its introduction in mid April, the Swift has been available with either a 1.3 or 1.5 litre petrol engine. The faithful and extremely efficient 1 litre three-cylinder from the good old days has now been discontinued. The Swift is also available as a 1.3 litre diesel engine. A Swift GTi and convertible are promised for 2006.

Today the agenda includes a trip around the mountains of the Cote d'Azur and through the chaotic Monegasque traffic. The 1.5 litre four cylinder petrol engine is the best choice to complete this task. The

editorial team also recognise this engine as a well-known power supply; it is also available in the Ignis 4x4 which was test driven on a trip to Geneva about a week ago.

Even so this well known engine still takes some getting used to during the first couple of miles. All the pedals are so light that all sense of feeling is missing. On top of this, the engine is so quiet that only the rev counter gives a definitive indication that there is any activity. The danger is consequently enormous to drive more ferociously than intended, or even just to let the engine die. On top of that, the brake pedal gives minimal feedback. It is only later in the day on deserted wasteland during a brake test that they score perfectly.



Morning rush hour

The controls take no time to get used to and after several minutes the little red test car has dived resolutely into the morning rush of Monte Carlo. Crawling along at a snail's pace, steering through tight turns and all the time with eyes in the back of your head in order to see the scooter saturated traffic from all sides. The Swift is in its element.

The car is easily surveyable. Although even with its adjustable steering wheel and seat, the bonnet is still not visible from the driver's position. Moreover the Swift does not look out of place amongst all the exotic creatures in the traffic, as they all crawl along in front of the local Bentley, Hummer and Maybach dealers. In the windows of the Ferrari-showroom with its separate Formula 1 branch, the little red Swift is reflected and creates a fascinating mix with the sports cars behind the window pane. This is a car to be proud of in a city where image is Number 1!

Crossing the Monegasque border, the test car heads for Nice. In the mountainous landscape, the car proves its playful character. The wheels are placed in the furthest corners, which maximizes its stability. Moreover the Swift has very large and wide tyres for such a small car, which is much better for road handling. Although, it is less favourable for a low fuel consumption.

The steering wheel with audio controls (no mp3 function though) has a handy grip; the winding course is laid out before the car and the accelerate pedal is pushed further to the floor. Like no other car in its class, the Swift comes alive. Like no other car in its class, the Swift is totally intuitive. As if it were a sports car, the Swift communicates with the driver and is from the very first moment very aware of what it can and cannot do. And there is a lot. There is a lot more driving pleasure than many other compact cars, but also a lot more safety. A car which can simply swerve without landing on the roadside is an awful lot more safe than a hundred airbags and crunch zones.

Grown up

Safe and nice is also the feeling of solidness. The evening before the test drive, a Suzuki representative took the time to tell how sturdy the new Swift is with the use of complex diagrams and explanations of the materials used.

Regardless of the theory: it ensures that the car steers more tightly. Moreover, the Swift gives a sturdy and durable sensation. Even details such as the exemplary finish and the feel of the gearbox contribute to this. At the same time this playful character shows that it has grown up and that it is enjoyable in the long run.



Long distance

It is over long distances that the kit in the "Exclusive" model is greatly valued. This model is apart from all the usual gear equipped with several options which have never before been seen in this class. One of which is the keyless start-up function, where it is sufficient to have the car key in a pocket. It doesn't have to move from your pocket; it can stay there. Quite simply, the driver acts as an antenna. Touching the car is enough to unlock the doors. Instead of an ignition lock, the large button on the steering column starts the car.

After awakening amongst the elite, playing in the mountains and a photo shoot in the touristy villages, this luxury test car adjusts quite well to ordinary life.

With high revs in the mountains, the engine emits a sporty noise that increases the sensation. Back on the motorway, the rpm is much lower making the journey home very easy. Even so the temptation is irresistible to sprint away at the toll barrier, and also to try just how easily the bend after the turnoff can be taken. After all these years, the Swift has maybe grownup but it still hasn't finished sowing its wild oats.



Conclusion

After a long absence, the new Suzuki Swift has been reintroduced onto a market which is overrun with newcomers. All the same, the Swift still stands out. The practical possibilities, the interior space particularly in the rear and the interior design doesn't score more than average. However in all other fields the Swift scores highly or at least as "different".

The hip, youthful, fast exterior is totally corroborated by the car's driving characteristics. The road handling is sublime, the driving pleasure enormous. During the test drive, the 1.5-litre model variant scored well, even though the car felt quicker than the measurements indicate and still is concurrently quiet and comfortable on the motorway. With the technology and equipment on offer, the new Swift is very reasonably priced. Playmates like this are always welcome! ■



Specifications

Suzuki Swift (2005 - 2010) 1.5 GLX

Size and weight



Length x width x height	370 x 169 x 150 cm
Wheelbase	238 cm
Kerb weight	955 kg
Trailer	400 kg
Trailer - braked	1.000 kg
Fuel capacity	45 l
Luggage space	213/562 l
Tyre size	

Engine and performance



Capacity	1490 cc
Cylinders / valves	4/4
Max power	102 PS @ 5900 rpm
Max torque	133 Nm @ 4100 rpm
Drive	front wheels
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	10 secs
Top speed	185 km/h
Average mileage	6.5 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	8.6 l / 100 km
Mileage extra urban	5.3 l / 100 km
CO2 emissions	159 gr / km

Price

Price	Â£ 8,699
Price base model	Â£ 7,699