



Suzuki Swift Sport

In top shape

Car review | Traditions are to be honoured. Even from the very start, the Suzuki Swift was always available in an extra sporty version. It started with a small car that was powered by a big engine. Over time the sportiest Swift was refined and today low emissions are as important as high performance. That is why it is now time for the fifth generation of the Suzuki Swift Sport.

In a way, Autozine exists because of the Suzuki Swift Sport. A rich uncle bought a Suzuki Swift GTi at the end of the eighties of the previous century. Dad was asked to tame the beast and yours truly sat in the back in admiration. The tiny Suzuki outperformed big BMWs and ghoulish Americans. A shimmering love for cars was awakened and the passion for compact fast cars was a fact.

It is from that love of cars that Autozine came to exist twelve years ago. The boy from yesteryear is now a test-driver and the Suzuki Swift Sport has matured as well. In the olden days of the Swift GTi, CO2 wasn't even invented; right now it is as important as the performance of a car.



That is why just putting a big engine in a small car won't suffice. Instead, an existing power train has been modified to increase performance, while hardly affecting fuel economy. For example, the internal friction has been decreased and airflow is now more efficient.

Cabin

Of course its looks have been altered, to emphasize the difference with an ordinary Swift. The Swift Sport

is fitted with spoilers, a bigger grille, light alloy rims and aggressive looking wide beams. The rear is decorated with a racey "diffuser" in a dark colour with two fat exhaust pipes right in the middle.



The new cabin boasts sporty seats (no bucket seats). The steering wheel is nice and small, while the dials have red backlighting. The stitching of the seats and other upholstery is red as well.

Just like with any other Swift, room in the front is fine, while legroom in the rear leaves something to be desired. Getting to the back seat is a challenge; first the front seat has to be moved forward and then the backrest has to be moved separately. After that the driver has to find that one perfect seating position once again.



Jump start?

It may sound odd, but at first the sporty character is hardly noticeable at all. And that's a compliment! The previous generation of the Swift Sport was a fun car, but comfort levels were minimal. On the open road the engine speed was so high that many drivers slowed down just to have a bit of peace and quiet.

The gearbox ratios of the new Swift Sport have been chosen so that performance is optimal in the first five gears, while sixth gear is an "overdrive" to travel longer distances with relative ease. This makes the new Swift Sport much more pleasant for everyday use.

The maximum output of 136 PS is only available at a very high engine speed. When not provoking the car, one would not suspect this is the fastest Swift. The clutch is easy to operate and the engine is so torquey that shifting is optional. For example: 60 km/h (35 mph) in sixth gear is no problem.

Full speed ahead

However... put the pedal to the metal and the Swift Sport screams in sheer happiness! Only when the rev counter is almost in the red zone, does the 1.6 litre four-cylinder engine (without a turbo or other "aids") deliver its full punch.



From the standstill, the Swift Sport takes off with lots of wheelspin, after which the power is so overwhelming that the front tyres struggle for grip. Thanks to a counterweight in the gear lever, the driver can shift "swiftly". It takes just over eight seconds to reach 100 km/h (62 mph).

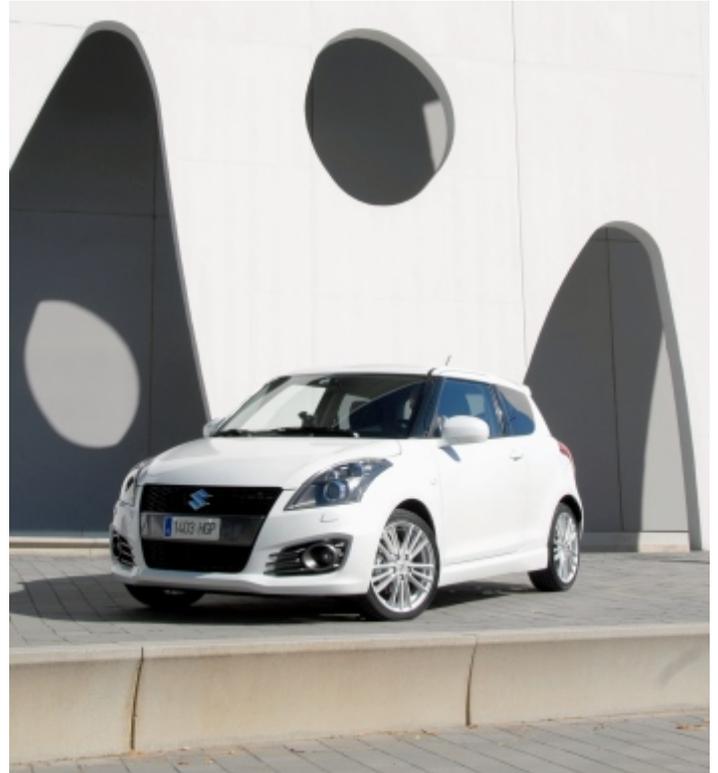


Objectively speaking that isn't a remarkable performance. Most large luxury cars with diesel will outperform the Swift without even knowing. The difference is: thanks to the poise and bravery with which the Swift performs the Suzuki feels much faster than those posh saloons. In other words: the Suzuki driver enjoys the ride more.

Curve

Although performance is good, the strong point of the Swift Sport is its handling. The Suzuki technicians have

enforced the steering rack in many places, resulting in a better feeling with the car. Just as important: thanks to lightweight rims the unsprung weight (the part of the weight the suspension doesn't control) is also reduced.



Thanks to these improvements the driver immediately feels what the car is capable of. When overdoing it, the Sport is incredibly easy to correct. Almost automatically the driver will use this by making the car slide sideways through the corner until the nose points the right way and then restore grip again.

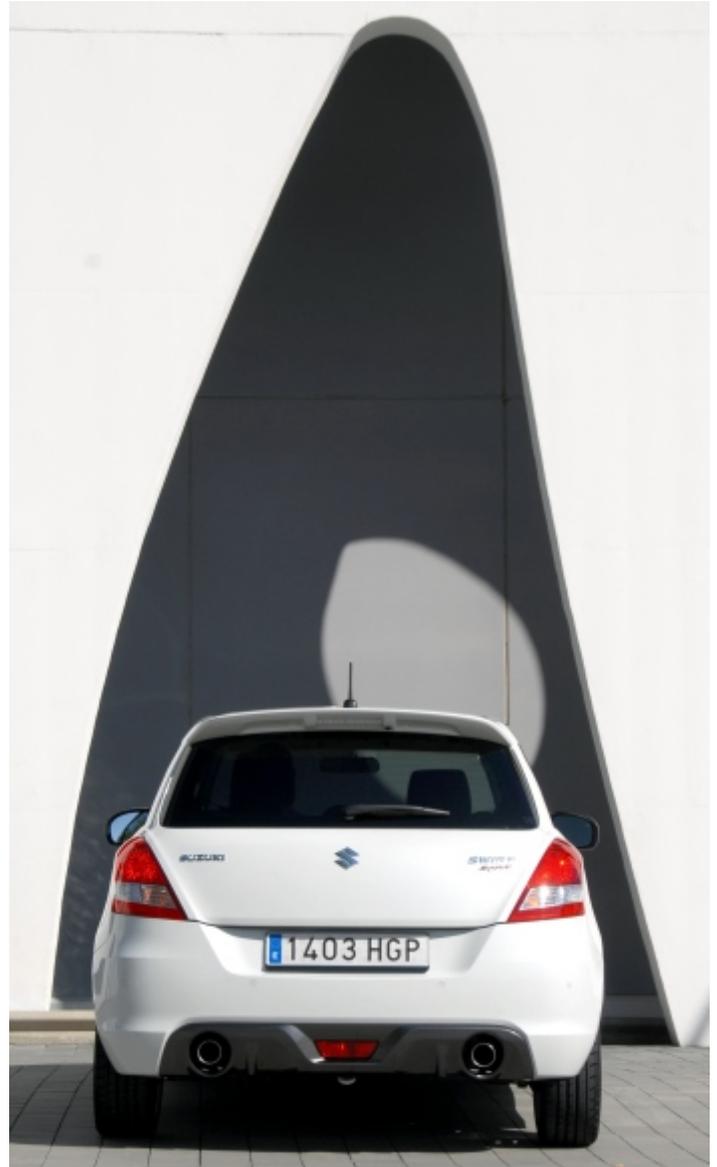
The back end can step aside by suddenly releasing the throttle in mid-corner. Even calm drivers cannot help but to increase cornering speed at every opportunity and rigorously slam the Swift left and right!



ESP (electronic stability programme) comes as standard and kicks in so late that the driver feels like he/she is going like greased lightning while in fact the computer always guarantees safety.

Fuel economy

The best is kept for last. As stated in the introduction, today fuel economy is as important as performance. Despite a highly demanding test track on which the full power of the car has been enjoyed repeatedly, the test drive cost only 5.6 litres per 100 km (50 mpg). With such great performance at such low fuel consumption the Swift Sport isn't just in shape, it is in top shape!



Conclusion

The Sport is in tip-top shape. That is the conclusion after a thorough test drive with the fastest Suzuki Swift. Just like the previous generations the Swift Sport offers plenty of driving fun. Its strong point is handling: roadholding is excellent, communication with the driver is good and whenever one goes over the limit the Swift Sport is very easy to correct.

The engine has matured. Thanks to a sixth gear, fuel economy has significantly improved and comfort levels have increased. The Swift performs with flair

and a sense of drama, making the car feel like it is faster than the cold hard numbers suggest. In the end the Swift Sport isn't a really fast car, but it certainly is a real fun car. ■

