



Suzuki SA310

The best car in the world

Review | What is the best car in the world? Is it the fastest? The greenest? The safest? Or perhaps the cheapest? Or maybe the most reliable one? If it is up to the Autozine editor the title of "best car in the world" goes to the Suzuki SA310. Find out why.

The SA310 is among the very first cars Suzuki ever marketed. The first one was the now legendary GX100 Coupe, but soon after that the SA310 emerged. The name wasn't catchy and sales figures lagged behind. Therefore the car was modernized in 1986. It got an extra cylinder and the name was changed to "Swift". However the one and only "SA310" is the star of this road test, although the sign at the back of the car has now faded and is hardly readable. Not so strange after 20 years of faithful duty. And that is one of the strongest points of this car: reliability.



Reliability

A brand new car still has to prove itself. The first couple of days on the road, it is not uncommon to return to the dealership for minor defects. A recently introduced car may even have some undiscovered design flaws.

A used car has proven itself, but there's a risk of a not so careful previous owner. The second owner fears every single rattle is a fatality, announcing the end. But

if one car proofed itself than it is the editor's SA310, with a cool 500.000 km on the analogue clock. This is thanks to sound construction of the Japanese manufacturer, but also to the careful owner. This car has never been used for city traffic, always sleeps in a garage and is maintained by an official Suzuki dealership.

Is the best car the cheapest car? When bought this 8 year old car had already done some 80.000 km. 12 years and 420.000 km later, depreciation has well been paid for while the first serious defect still has to raise it's ugly head. Of course every car has the usual wear and tear like brakes, tires and exhausts but even that's less than average. Together with an extremely low gas mileage, the costs per kilometer are minimal. Besides that the environment will be happy with an economic car like that (although it is honest to state that the catalytic converted had not yet been invented in 1983).

Steady as a rock

A colleague motoring journalist once had a saying about safety: "Who would drive more carefully? The driver who knows that a soft pillow will come out of the steering column at an accident, or the driver who knows a sharp spear will come out of the steering wheel?". That question has well been answered after many years of driving the SA310. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure and the SA310-driver does anything to prevent. Also, the level of active safety has become a problem in 2003 traffic. Modest braking for one is panic for this little Suzuki (discs front, drum brakes rear).

Depending on road conditions this car suffers from both understeer (speeding in the corner) and over-steer (cornering too sharply). Because the Suzuki does not have to comply with the current fashion of wide tires, this car has smaller tires than some trailers! And that's a good thing, these small wheels cut trough snow ensuring better handling than many modern cars. Despite it's lack of modern electronics, this car does fine in extreme weather conditions.

The concept of a "fast car" depends on the era. The first generations of GTI's managed to accelerate from

0 to 60 MPH in 10 seconds. To date even a diesel does better. This first generation Suzuki Swift features a 3 cylinder 993 cc engine. That is sufficient for 50 horsepower, which will pull the chariot to 60 km/u in 15 seconds flat.

Modernisms like 16-valve technique or injection where not yet available in 1983 for small cars. This Suzuki does have an automatic choke, which was unique for a compact car. Traffic has become fierce in due time and these figures are not longer enough. Also a mechanic stated correctly: "an old man should not run". Because of this advice the engine has become smoother and quieter with age.

Band

Despite it's age the test car is still free of squeaks and rattles. The SA310 is even according to today's standards remarkably comfortable. And this most luxurious "GL" version has some neat extras like power braking (but fortunately no power steering), halogen lights, a rear window wiper and -very modern- a five speed gearbox. A crackled sticker on the boot still reminds the owner of this proud fact.

Finally, after a long time a band between car and owner will build. The SA310 has been through quite a lot: college, commuting to work, the first speeding ticket, the first car holiday, the first adventures with girls and a career as a demo-car for a car-audio magazine. The latter means this car is still filled to capacity with amplifiers, speakers and even a home cinema. The car was shown on several dream car shows and won most car-audio competitions.

Now this very same and indestructible SA310 is the Autozine editor's car. The vehicle stays over at the car parks of car manufacturers, while the owner test drives shinny new cars. But whatever car has been tested, at the end of every test drive the Suzuki is chosen once again as the preferred car for a pleasant drive back home.



Conclusion

Is the best car in the world the fastest or perhaps the most flashy car? In that case the Suzuki SA310 may not be the winner. Very few schoolboys will have a poster of a compact 80's car on their bedroom wall. But if a good car is about safety, gas mileage, reliability and costs then the SA310 has proven itself over a period of more than 20 years and over 500.000 KM. Those new cars have yet to improve on that! So for now, the Suzuki SA310 is the best car in the world. ■



Specifications

Suzuki SA310

Size and weight



Length x width x height	359 x 155 x 135 cm
Wheelbase	225 cm
weight	675 kg
Trailer	337 kg
Trailer - braked	800 kg
Fuel capacity	31 l
Luggage space	70/ l
Tyre size	

Engine and performance



Capacity	993 cc
Cylinders / valves	3/2
power	50 PS @ 5800 rpm
Max torque	75 Nm @ 3600 rpm
Drive	front wheels
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	14.9 secs
topspeed	145 km/h
Average mileage	5.5 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	6.4 l / 100 km
Mileage extra urban	4.2 l / 100 km
CO2 emissions	unknown

Price

Price	Â£ 0
Price base model	Â£ 0