



SWIFT BY NAME

Great things come in small packages according to Tim Barnes-Clay, as he takes the latest Suzuki Swift Sport out for a spin.



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If a super-mini is the kind of car that toots your horn, then let me tell you, you'll get a lot more for your money with the new Suzuki Swift Sport. Expected to sell for around £14,500, and available in the UK as of January, I got to take it for a test drive around Barcelona as part of the Japanese company's efforts to promote its latest model to the media. And I was suitably impressed; this car has more control, it's fun and has lower emissions than its predecessor. But, the best thing about it is that a sixth gear has been added to a gearbox which has been woefully lacking in the past.

On the outside, the Swift Sport looks great from the rear. A wind diffuser and twin tailpipes give it an appearance similar to a Renault Clio Sport. The



front is less extreme, but from the side, the car has a low-slung stance which immediately distinguishes it from a standard Swift. What's more, 17-inch alloy wheels enhance its chunkier, more potent image.

Behind the wheel, the new model is quicker off the mark than the last one, largely due to an increase in power output, which has risen from 121bhp to 134bhp. The sixth gear also helps to improve acceleration and grants the speedy Suzuki a more sporty gear change, while the leather-clad steering wheel and front sports seats lend an athletic feel. The seats will grip you when the car is flung around corners (and there were plenty of left and right-handers twisting around the hills overlooking beautiful Barcelona). Don't get me wrong, the Swift Sport is never going to give you an adrenaline overdose, but it's exciting enough to stand up to fast little numbers like the Citroen DS3, the Fiat Punto Evo and the MINI Cooper.

With seven airbags, this Japanese pocket-rocket is safe as well as sprightly. It offers the same control and peace of mind as the standard Swift, which earned a five-star rating in the European New Car Assessment Programme (NCAP) and the

highest overall points scored amongst other new cars tested at the time. Standard safety equipment includes anti-lock braking with electronic braking-force distribution, and an Electronic Stability Programme (ESP).

Of course, no super-mini is ever going to have a massive boot. But the Swift Sport doesn't have much of a load area at all; it's more like a rectangular slot! It can accommodate a couple of biggish bags, and if you're a parent with a penchant for small, fast cars, then you might just about squeeze in the tiniest buggy in the world. But, in spite of this, the rear seats do have room for two child seats. Without them, two adults would be able to fit in the back – with limited legroom, however.

Suzuki anticipates this fresh offering to appeal to motorists in their early 30's, with a 60/40 split in favour of men buying the car. So, there's always a chance that parents up for a fun ride could go for this motor. I suspect that many won't be looking at the Swift Sport as a practical option though; it'll be the single girls and guys with a limited budget and a real need for speed who'll be heading in their droves to Suzuki dealerships come 2012.

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