

Swiftly does it

By  Ané Theron

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Are you a driving enthusiast on a shoestring budget? Suzuki's latest incarnation of its sporty city runabout might satisfy your quick-cornering craving and still save you money on monthly instalments. Let's see if the new Swift will fit in with your lifestyle.

The Suzuki Swift has always been the go-to budget car for those who need their entry-level wheels to do more than just take them from point A to B.

I remember doing an advanced driving course on Killarney's skid pan in 2011 in none other than a sunshine yellow Swift. Oh, the fun we had! But space for much luggage there sadly wasn't.



What's changed?

When automakers tinker with a winning recipe, it's usually done with the same mindfulness as a Middle-Eastern hostage negotiation. The Swift is the brand's most popular global model and changes have been made mostly to increase interior comfort and practicality, but also to aid driving dynamics.



A wider track and longer wheelbase mean that the Swift feels more planted in corners, and a significant number of kilos lost has further enhanced the Swift's nimbleness. While my yellow Swift of 2011 weighed in at 1010kg, the latest Swift is a svelte and lithe 872kg. This also helps to keep fuel consumption low, and the trip computer showed our average consumption to sit at around 5.3 litres per 100km.

What's the cabin like?

Having driven the brilliant Suzuki Baleno last year, I immediately thought that this looked almost exactly like it - it's upmarket and quite sophisticated for its price, but predominantly black and styled in such a way that the interior won't start looking dated any time soon. Some welcome improvements include a more sporty-looking steering wheel and redesigned front seats that offer firmer support.



Suzuki has also angled the centre console slightly towards the driver and fitted the speedometer and rev counter in separate housings "to accentuate the vehicle's nature as a driver's car."

There's still no infotainment screen in the centre of the Swift like the Indian market gets, but in no way did I miss it.

Touchscreens have a nasty habit of leeching your attention away from the road ahead, and the neat Bluetooth-enabled sound system is quite sufficient for your daily commute. There is a USB and a 12V port underneath the air-con switchgear.

Road-tripping around Elgin and Grabouw

Perfectly sprung to feel comfortable over bumpy roads but hard enough to still feel sporty, the Swift is a dynamic little car that has an almost surprising amount of oomph for its little free-revving 1.2-litre engine, with light, direct steering for city driving and a slick-shifting 5-speed gearbox.



The back roads and mountain passes of Elgin and Grabouw were our playground for the day, and the Swift couldn't be happier to stretch its little legs around the bends of the Franschhoek pass. It's quite delighted to be pushed to its limits and stays mostly stable and composed as you push it well into the redline, but we did feel like we got blown about a little, as a heavy South-Easter worked its magic on us.

Everyday practicality and safety equipment

The Suzukis of late are all big on user-friendliness and the Swift's design crew obviously listened to consumers. The boot is now considerably bigger, and capable of swallowing 268 litres of your best overnight luggage - that's 72 litres more than before. Safety spec comprises ABS and EBD with brake assist and two frontal airbags, but no traction/stability control, which can be found in some of the other budget offerings such as the VW Up! and Renault Sandero.



Personally, I feel that this is a must - in many overseas countries ESC is mandatory, as it plays such a big part in keeping you in control of your car in slippery conditions. In South Africa however, it's still something that we mostly don't see in this segment. (Be sure to also read [Safest Small Cars for New Drivers](#) to see my list of SA's most affordable, safest cars.)

Verdict

The Swift has pretty much everything a city dweller needs and is competitively priced, offering drivers of all age groups what they need most in a small car, with the added fun factor to make the daily commute a little less of a slog. Definitely, one to consider if you need more than just affordable, reliable transport.

The Suzuki Swift 1.2 GL is priced at R177,900.

ABOUT ANÉ THERON

Ané Theron started her career in motoring journalism at Rapport, and moved over to City Press after a few years, before settling into a full time career at AutoTrader SA. She's at her happiest driving along twisty coastal roads, or crawling across rugged terrain in a beefy 4x4, or driving through the desolate Karoo. And taking photos along the way, of course.

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