

Suzuki Jimny

Featuring 1.3JLX



SUZUKI, THAT NICHE MARKETEER PAR excellence, has, yet again, come up with something different – a “lifestyle compact”. Is it a town car, is it an off-roader? Well, yes to both, because it’s a sort of baby 4x4 that takes up the same road space as a Ford Ka, although naturally it’s a fair bit (30cm actually) taller.

Beneath its pert and curvy lines and wrap-over bonnet there’s a new 1.3/79bhp all-alloy engine that produces 76 lb ft of torque from 2500rpm. Unlike many 16-valve motors, this one suffers little from low-rev doldrums and will respond keenly without being revved hard. It will go as low as 1200rpm without complaint, yet it’s a smooth little spinner, too – all the way to 6500rpm, although it starts to become vocal halfway round the tachometer and really begins to holler from exactly 70mph onwards. “Loud and lively” sums it up. In contrast, it’s a lot quieter when driven gently; indeed, it cruises discreetly at 60 to 65mph.

Gearchanging is no chore, because the light and positive shift is exemplary. It’s a pity that the overall gearing is so low, though. At about 17mph per 1000rpm, the Jimny sounds fussy at motorway speeds and you wish there were another gear to go. On the other hand, road noise is remarkably low, thanks to the separate ladder-frame chassis.

From the gearbox the power is delivered to a high and low ratio transfer ‘box operated by a second lever that also has a deftness of touch that makes even the latest Land Rover Discovery’s feel agricultural in comparison. And with this “Drive Action 4x4”, you don’t have to stop to shift from two- to four-wheel drive at below 62mph in high mode (although you do from 4H to 4L), and the front hubs lock automatically, as well.

The Jimny may look a bit of a joke (“Is that your Tonka toy outside?”), but it’s seriously proficient when it comes to off-roading. Even on standard road tyres its traction was impressive on the slippery slime and unforgiving ruts and rocks of the demanding course we tackled. The little Suzuki is superbly nimble and agile, and thanks to short front and rear overhangs, steep hills can be climbed and descended with confidence. You don’t, however, get powerful diesel-like engine braking with this power unit, of course.

But most Jimnys will be destined for a life on smooth tarmac – and the smoother the better, because frankly, ride comfort isn’t this baby’s forté. Stick to A roads and it’s all right, but belt along broken blacktop and it’s decidedly choppy and jerky. The high build means that it feels rather top heavy when cornering briskly, too, but the steering is light and precise and has a tight turning circle, so manoeuvrability is first class; there’s no feel through

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PERFORMANCE

Acceleration time in seconds

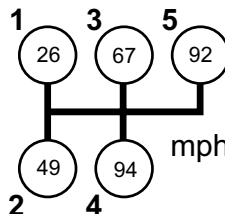
mph	30	40	50	60	70
THROUGH THE GEARS		2.2	5.1	8.8	14.3
IN 5TH GEAR		6.9	13.5	21.8	32.4
IN 4TH GEAR		5.1	10.4	16.6	23.3

20 mph	30	40	50	60	70
5TH/4TH SPEED RANGES	13.7/10.3		14.9/11.5		
		13.5/10.4		18.9/12.9	

Maximum speeds

REVS PER MINUTE	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
		6500*		6400	5425

* for best acceleration



FUEL CONSUMPTION

Fuel grade: unleaded Premium, 95 octane	
Type of use - air conditioning off*	mpg
In the city – heavy traffic	21
In the country – quiet driving	45½
Typical mpg overall	33½
Realistic tank range †	35 litres/260 miles

*with air conditioning switched on, consumption will increase by 2–4% in winter and 4–8% in summer

FOR THE TECHNICAL

ENGINE

Type longitudinal four in line; all-alloy construction with five main bearings

Size 74 x 75.5mm = 1298cc

Power 79bhp at 6000rpm

Torque 77 lb ft at 4500rpm

Valves belt-driven single overhead camshaft actuating four valves per cylinder

Fuel/ignition electronic multi-point petrol injection with programmed electronic ignition. Exhaust catalyser and 40-litre tank – no low-level lamp

TRANSMISSION

Type five-speed manual (four-speed automatic optional); part-time, shift-on-the-move 4x4 with high and low ratio transfer 'box

Mph per 1000rpm 16.9 in 5th, 14.7 in 4th

CHASSIS

Suspension front: coil-sprung live axle with telescopic dampers and three-link location; anti-roll bar. Rear: coil-sprung live axle with telescopic dampers, trailing arms and Panhard rod location

Steering ball and nut with hydraulic power assistance; 4.0 turns between full locks. Turning circles average 10.0m between kerbs, with 16.1m circle for one turn of the wheel

Wheels 15in steel (alloys optional) with 205/70R15S tyres (Bridgestone Dueler H/T on test car). Full-size spare

Brakes discs front, drums rear with vacuum servo. ABS anti-lock control optional

SAFETY AND SECURITY FEATURES

Assessed on their effectiveness and convenience (the more black blobs the better)

Seatbelts

front ●●●●○ rear ●●●●○

Door locking

central locking? ☒ ●●○○○

remote control? ☒ ☒ X

auto window closure? ☒ X

deadlocks? ☒ X

Head restraints

front ●●○○○ rear ●●○○○

Interior

safety padding ●●○○○

driver's airbag? ☒

other airbags? (1) ☒

side impact protection ●●●○○

Luggage

secure from interior/hidden from view ●●○○○

Alarm

engine immobilised? ☒ ☐

Fuel anti-spillage

●●●○○

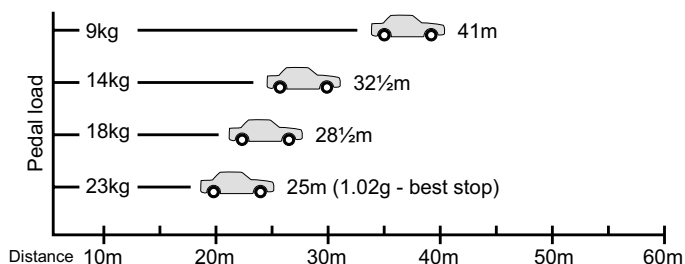
☒ standard on test car ☐ factory fitted option ☒ not available

Euro NCAP crash test results - not available

BRAKES

Pedal feel ●●●●○ Behaviour in an emergency ●●●○○ Handbrake ●●●●○

Dry road stopping distance from 50mph (no ABS)
A good-to-average best stop is about 28m at 20-30kg pedal load)

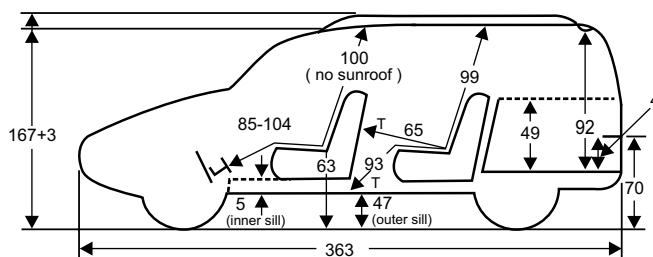


Fade test: pedal load required for a moderate (34m/.75g) stop:
16kg at start of test, 12kg at end of test (Ideal brakes show no change)

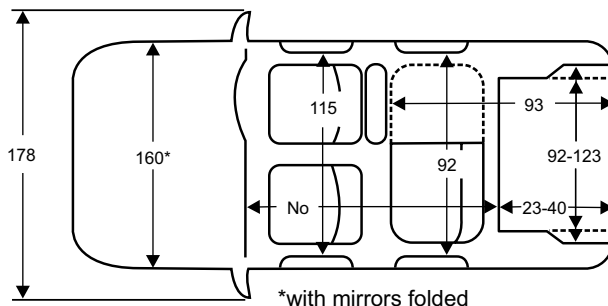
MEASUREMENTS

Centimetres

Three-door



T: typical back seat space behind medium-sized front occupants



the wheel, though, and it's low geared, despite power assistance. Conversely, the brakes feel good and stop well – even without the optional ABS. The handbrake is excellent, as well.

The Jimny is easy to handle and park, thanks to a commanding driving position with good vision – the big door mirrors are a boon – sensible control layout (although the radio/cassette has fiddly knobs and buttons) and clear instruments in the neat fascia. Having a pair of trip mileage recorders is handy, but curiously, the rear wash and wipe switches aren't illuminated at night. Up-market touches on the JLX include electric windows and door mirrors and central door locking. Although there's no sunroof, air conditioning is available to complement the heating and ventilation that are well thought out, with cooler air to your face if needed. The temperature control slide lacks progression, however, with cool air turning warm too soon. Twin airbags are standard and the adjustable-height front seatbelts incorporate pretensioners.

The two doors open wide and the passenger's seat tilts and slides well forwards (the driver's doesn't slide automatically), but getting to the back seats is easiest if you're agile. If you're also on the small side, so much the better, because two of you sit in cosy proximity between the substantial intruding side panels with hard plastic armrests, and kneeroom is decidedly tight. Headroom and footspace are good, though. The seats, though

modestly sized, are, in fact, comfortably shaped and boast a valuable five-notch recline mechanism.

They also fold forward independently to give a versatile load space 90cm square. However, the folded backrest creates an uneven, stepped floor, but the side-opening back door is unlikely seriously to hamper the loading of wide objects. Mind you, with four up there's only room for a big, squashy bag anyway; perhaps that's why integral roof rails are standard. There's no load cover, and other notable absentees are a rear roof light and load-lashing eyes.

A wide range of accessories is available to personalise the Jimny, including alloy wheels, a spare wheel cover, side step-boards and a rear spoiler.

VERDICT

The Jimny is one of those cars that you'll find either appalling or appealing depending on your point of view and, of course, your "lifestyle". Appalling because of its awful on-road ride and raucously revving engine; appealing because of its cheeky charm and cutesy looks that belie the fact that it's a highly competent little off-roader. In fact, it revels in conditions to which it will rarely be subjected. It's decidedly snug inside, four up, when it's essential to travel light, but as a 2 + 2 with decent luggage space it's a practical little go-anywhere funster. A little titch it may be, but it has great character.



LIKES AND GRIPES

Convenient pedal layout	...	but a left footrest would be useful
Big, removable rear head restraints	...	but they mar rearward view when in place
Well-placed switches	...	but their inbuilt warning lights are tiny
Four cup-holders and several stowage areas	...	but door pockets too slim to be of much use
Generous rear window heating elements	...	but contacts vulnerable to cargo damage
Sensible protection for rear bumper moulding	...	but plastic sides to cargo area easily scarred
Smooth, sound paintwork on the outside	...	but underbonnet area and fuel flap left in primer