

Suzuki Wagon R+



IF YOU CAN BUY THE SAME CAR AS a Vauxhall, why buy a Suzuki? There are fewer dealers, the list price is higher ...

Clearly, anyone serious about owning the Wagon R should refer to our Agila report as well. However, there are differences – subtle but significant – and despite a recent price rise, the Suzuki's standard kit, ready-for-the-road, would actually cost nearly £200 more on the Agila.

Of course, the Wagon R has been selling well for several years back home in Japan. This latest European version is built in Hungary and obviously has much in common with the Polish-assembled Agila.

The biggest difference is under the bonnet. Enlarged from 1.2 to 1.3 litres, the Suzuki all-alloy engine is quicker, but brasher than the Agila's 1.2 unit and its pattern of thirst is different too – see our 'Fuel Economy' panels on both cars for the details, including a cheaper car tax band.

Not only in power-delivery but in matters of suspension and seating too, the Wagon R is firmer, trying to be tauter, more extrovert. The wider, lower-profile tyres succeed in giving better emergency braking but no one could describe this Suzuki as a sports hatch. Indeed, it has a four-speed automatic option – of the old-style, inefficient but user-friendly kind; this should improve its town-car appeal even more but expect to suffer an overall 5-7mpg loss as well.

No, the real advantages of the Wagon R are not dynamic, but emerge when it comes to negotiating narrow or

congested roads or tricky parking slots, or when you need to convey three full-sized passengers on a regular basis. The interior finish is surprisingly posh as well, with a rear-seat folding arrangement that is second-to-none.

More's the pity therefore that its clutch engages early and unprogressively and that several items are too stiff for arthritic hands. The heater too, suffers from uneven side-to-side warmth at lower temperature settings – bad news if your regular passenger likes more warmth than you, the driver.

VERDICT

Some people choose a car because of its looks, others by what they think they look like, being seen in it. We have to say that even this perked-up Wagon R is unlikely to appeal to either sort. No, the main reasons for preferring either the Agila or Wagon R will be to make your domestic motoring cheaper and more hassle-free. In town or around the lanes, they succeed admirably, with the Wagon R showing to advantage in both acceleration and fuel economy, at such times. However, the Agila is less of a fidget, more easy-going. The choice is yours.

AT A GLANCE

considering size, price and rivals

Overtaking ability	☆☆☆☆○
Space/practicality	☆☆☆☆☆
Controls/displays	☆☆☆☆○
Safety	☆☆☆☆○
Handling/steering	☆☆☆☆○
Comfort	☆☆☆☆○
Fuel economy	☆☆○○○

SPECIFICATION

engine 1298cc, 4-cylinder, petrol; 76bhp at 5500rpm, 85 lb ft at 4250rpm; belt-driven single overhead camshaft, 16 valves

transmission 5-speed manual, front wheel drive; 18.8 mph/1000rpm in 5th, 15.8 in 4th

suspension front: independent damper/struts with integral coil springs.

Rear: torsion beam (dead) axle, coil springs and a Panhard rod

steering electric power assistance; 3.3 turns lock-to-lock; 10.25m diameter turning circle between kerbs (16.0m for one turn of the wheel)

brakes solid discs front, drums rear, with ABS anti-skid control optional extra

wheels/tyres 4½in steel with 165/60R14 tyres (Michelin on test car); full size spare

LIKES ...

unobtrusive seatbelts in use
no door sills to speak of
light, powerful handbrake
cool heads/warm feet easy to attain

... and GRIPES

miniscule radio controls – set low
interior lamps' switch too stiff
clutch too sudden – easy to stall
demise of under-seat plastic bucket!

THE WAGON-R RANGE

body mini/city MPV-style hatch (mid priced)

trim levels GA, GL

engines petrol: 4 cylinder/1.3 litre/76bhp
diesel: none

drive front-wheel drive, 5-speed manual;
4-speed stepped automatic (with torque converter) optional

OVERTAKING ABILITY ★★★★○					
<i>Livelier and more rorty than 1.2 Agila; gears clunky but not obstructive – clutch too abrupt. Flexible at low (town) speeds</i>					
acceleration in seconds	through gears*	④ th gear	⑤ th gear		
20-40mph	3.7	9.8	13.0		
30-50mph	4.8	9.7	12.3		
40-60mph	6.4	10.6	13.5		
50-70mph	8.4	11.3	16.7		
30-70mph	13.2	21.0	29.0		
max speed in each gear (*using 6000rpm for best acceleration)					
gear	①*	②*	③*	④*	⑤
speed (mph)	27	48	72	95	98

SPACE AND PRACTICALITY ★★★★★			
<i>As a four-seater only, room and ease of seat folding put larger cars to shame. Parking is a doddle too and central locking works well</i>			
in centimetres (5-door city car)		inside	(† without sunroof)
outside		front - legroom	94-107
length	350	- headroom	104†
width - inc mirrors	194	rear - typical leg/	98/
- mirrors folded	175	kneeroom	68
height (inc roof bars)	170	- headroom	100†
load sill (inside/outside)	4/64	- hiproom	123
steering		load space (all seats in use)	
turns lock-to-lock	3.3	(litres/cu ft)	280/9.9
turning circle (metres)	10.25	load length	48-114
		full length to fascia	210
easy to park/garage?		load width	112-132
	★★★★○	load height (to shelf/	48/
		to top of aperture)	98

CONTROLS AND DISPLAYS ★★★★○	
<i>Front seats harder than Agila's but it's a good driving position – despite stiff rake handwheel and no height adjustment for wheel or seat. Dial lighting fixed and bright</i>	
	

SAFETY ★★★★○	
<i>Star ratings based on primary safety. Brakes better than Agila's – obviously, tyres make a difference. Stable cornering too, though no sports-hatch</i>	
braking	
pedal feel	★★★★○
in emergency	★★★★○
handbrake	★★★★○
dry road stopping distance	
from 50mph (without ABS)	
pedal load	distance
10kg	36m
29kg	24½m best stop
+4kg ie 33kg	29m skidding

EURO NCAP CRASH TEST RATINGS

Suzuki Wagon R+ not yet tested

SECURITY FEATURES		
central locking	✓	alarm
remote control	✗	immobiliser
auto window closure	✗	luggage security
deadlocks	✓	
		★★★★○
✓ standard	0 factory option	✗ not available

HANDLING AND STEERING ★★★★○	
<i>Only high-set seats deters quick cornering – passengers complain. Some directional 'nervousness' in cross-winds or on bumpy roads</i>	
	

COMFORT ★★★★○

Ride a shade harsher than Agila's (tyres/seats?) but surprisingly generous head and legroom all round. Too noisy between 60 and 70mph – but better after that!

FUEL ECONOMY ★★★○○○	
<i>Same overall as Vauxhall but uses less on short trips – more on the motorway. Easy filler but "can't lose it" cap may also be "can't undo it!"</i>	
type of use (air conditioning off)	AA test (mpg)
urban (17mph average/heavy traffic)	32
suburban (27mph average/6.4 miles from cold start)	39
motorway (70mph cruising)	34
cross-country (brisk driving/20 miles from cold start)	44
rural (gentle driving/20 miles from cold start)	52
typical mpg overall	42
realistic tank capacity/range	36 litres/330miles
official mpg (urban/extra urban/combined)	36.2/55.4/46.3
CO ₂ emissions 145g/km	car tax band A

HOW THE WAGON R COMPARES	engine cyl/cap/power (no/cc/bhp)	revs at 70mph (rpm)	30-70mph through gears (sec)	30-70mph in 5th/4th gears (sec)	fuel economy (mpg)	brakes - best stop from 50mph (m/kg)	maximum legroom - front (cm)	typical leg/ kneeroom - rear (cm)	steering turns/ circle (m)	overall length (cm)
SUZUKI WAGON R 1.3 GL	4/1298/76	3730	13.2	29.0/21.0	42	24½/29	107	98/68	3.3/10.25	350
Hyundai Amica GSi	4/999/55	3740	17.6	35.0/26.5	46	29/17	99	99/63	3.0/9.6	350
Vauxhall Agila 1.2 16v	4/1199/75	3720	14.7	34.2/24.7	42	28/27	107	98/68	3.3/10.35	350
Daewoo Matiz SE	3/796/50	4300	21.8	45.6/29.0	44½	25½/27	105	101/66	3.2/9.3	350
Toyota Yaris 1.0 GS	4/998/68	3850	14.8	32.5/23.3	47	26½/12	105	102/70	3.3/10.1	362
Ford Ka 2	4/1299/60	3490	17.3	31.0/21.4	42	28/22	105	92/64	2.8/10.1	362
Peugeot 106 1.1 Zest	4/1124/60	3790	14.1	29.6/20.8	46½	29/27	106	89/64	4.1/9.75 ^(m)	368

(m) manual steering