

Motoring New Car Road Test

Suzuki Swace arrives as the

The Swace is a new model to come from Suzuki's partnership with Toyota, but what's it like? **Ted Welford** finds out

LOOKING at the Suzuki Swace and thinking 'that looks familiar', but the name isn't ringing any bells? Well, you wouldn't be alone.

And that's because, while the Swace might be a new model for Suzuki, it's essentially a Toyota Corolla Touring Sport (an estate to you and me) – meaning it shares that model's tried-and-tested hybrid powertrain, and even rolls off the same manufacturing plant in Burnaston, Derbyshire.

But is there really room for Suzuki's new model? Let's find out.

What's new?

If we have to be blunt, not a lot really. Granted, Suzuki has made sure that all the Toyota badges are covered over with its emblem, and there's a new front-end – including a more prominent front grille and larger fog lights, helping it to look slightly more like a Suzuki.

But even inside, this is fundamentally just a Toyota – even down to the graphics and infotainment system being more-or-less identical. This, therefore, isn't like the Volkswagen Group arrangement where models such as Seat Leon and Audi A3 share core parts but are very different in execution. Rather, the Swace really is a rebadged model.

What's under the bonnet?

Though the Corolla gets the choice of two 'self-charging' powertrains, the Swace is only offered with the entry-level of the pair – a 1.8-litre petrol engine joined with a small electric motor. This type of set-up is a first for Suzuki, and combined, the engine and motor produce 120bhp – allowing for a 0-60mph time of 10.9 seconds and a top speed of 112mph. A CVT automatic gearbox is also used, with power being sent to the front wheels.

But, really, the Swace isn't a model that will be bought for its performance, but rather its efficiency. Suzuki claims it will return 64.2mpg on the combined cycle, while CO₂ emissions are 99g/km.

What's it like to drive?

Behind the wheel, it's the Swace's comfort and ease of driving that shine through. Sitting on small 16-inch alloy



■ The revised front end helps to give the Suzuki Swace more of an identity

wheels (regardless of trim level), the ride is especially compliant – soaking up potholes with ease and generally being especially relaxing to travel in.

The latest Corolla has also proven to handle quite sweetly, and the Swace retains that same trait – it's never sporty, but is smooth, well-balanced and more joyful

to hustle down a back road than you might expect. With the hybrid system, it's also able to run for short bursts as an EV – especially around town – though you have to be feather-light with the throttle as otherwise the engine kicks into life.

In fact, the only real gripe here is the CVT gearbox, which seems to drain the hybrid system of its power, and sounds especially strained if you're trying to accelerate quickly.

How does it look?

Though we could lambast Suzuki for not doing more to make its Swace stand out from Toyota's effort, given the Corolla is a pretty appealing-looking option, there are worse cars to share a design with.

So, though the Swace is never going to make heads swivel, it's quite a neat design. Especially at the front, where the revised front end helps to give it more of an identity – with sharp LED headlights and a low front bumper making it look more purposeful.

What's it like inside?

It's not what you'd call 'premium' but is solidly built, with a strong focus on ergonomics.



■ The interior is solidly built with a strong focus on ergonomics



■ The Swace is powered by a 1.8-litre petrol engine joined with a small electric motor



■ Standard kit includes an eight-inch touchscreen

Motoring New Car Road Test

firm's new hybrid estate car

Fact box

- Model: Suzuki Swace
- Price: From £24,152 from Motor Mall
- Model as tested: Swace SZ5
- Engine: 1.8-litre petrol-electric hybrid
- Power: 120bhp
- Torque: 142Nm (engine), 163Nm (electric motor)
- Max speed: 112mph
- 0-60mph: 10.9 seconds
- MPG: 64.2mpg
- CO₂ emissions: 99g/km

gonomics. The clear instruments and an eight-inch media system also lack fuss and aren't as distracting as other systems.

One strange oddity, though, the touchscreen has a 'Map' shortcut button, but click on it and it just says 'not available'. It's no big drama, though, as standard smartphone mirroring lets you use your probably superior navigation app anyway.

And few will be able to criticise the Swace when it comes to space, either. The rear seats offer great access and plenty of room for adults, while a 596-litre boot is a fantastic size. It's not really surprising the Corolla has become such a hit with taxi and minicab drivers.

What's the spec like?

Two trim levels are available on the Swace – SZ-T and SZ5 – and you're unlikely to be disappointed with the equipment levels.

That's because the kit is very generous as standard, including heated front seats, a heated steering wheel, reversing camera



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and eight-inch touchscreen. Upgrading to the SZ5 brings keyless entry, park assist, blind spot monitoring and wireless smartphone charging.

Prices for the Swace start from £24,152, and that's where our money would go, as you can easily live without the extras on the top-spec SZ5.

Verdict

Judged as a separate car, the new Suzuki Swace is a very appealing option, especially where comfort, practicality and efficiency are concerned.

It also drives well (CVT gearbox aside)

and gets a long list of equipment as standard. Should Suzuki have tried to do more to distinguish its own car? Perhaps, but when you have such a credible all-rounder from Toyota to begin with, this is a solid foundation and one that should help this Japanese carmaker to appeal to a new range of buyers.

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