

# 4WD BUYERS GUIDE

## SUZUKI GRAND VITARA

### SMALL WAGONS



**You have to hand it to Suzuki: this company decides on a product line, makes it beautifully and keeps it current and competitive for many years. The Grand Vitara is a case in point.**

For 2009 Suzuki further upgraded the Grand Vitara. A new petrol engine line-up headed the changes, with a 2.4-litre, 122kW, variable valve timing (VVT) four cylinder engine and a 3.2-litre VVT V6. The 2.4-litre powered three- and five-door models, replacing the superseded 1.6-litre (three-door) and 2.0-litre (five-door) engines.

A four-speed automatic transmission was available for the three-door, which came standard with ESC, six SRS airbags and front and rear ventilated disc brakes. The five-door Grand Vitara added cruise control.

A new five-door 2.4-litre Prestige version joined the line-up, complete with leather trim, sunroof, mirror-mounted side indicators, ESP, six SRS airbags, premium seven-speaker (plus subwoofer) sound system and 17-inch aluminium wheels.



The 1.9-litre turbo-diesel DDiS engine was reworked for an eight per cent improvement in fuel economy. The 165kW Prestige V6 completed the range, with the all-new 3.2-litre quad-cam V6 offering 22 per cent more power than the outgoing 2.7-litre V6. Claimed economy was 10.5 L/100km.

Standard features include High Intensity Discharge (HID) projector headlamps with dusk sensor and washers, hill descent control and hill hold control, a premium seven-speaker (plus subwoofer) six-CD sound system and mirror-mounted side indicators.

Not so good was unavailability of the 95kW/300Nm diesel engine option in the Prestige level: diesels were only base spec' and with a manual five-speed box.

## On and Off-road

Our testing of 2009-year Grand Vitaras showed that these compact 4WDs are a match for larger machinery. The Grand Vitara is something of a Tardis, because it looks smaller than it actually is.

We were surprised by how much camping stuff we could cram into it. The seats tumble forward without the need to remove the headrests. Cargo is restrained by sturdy tie-downs and there's a lidded cubby hole inset into the rear floor.

The spare wheel bolts to the rear door, so there's no need to unload the vehicle to access the spare. A powerful gas strut takes the work out of opening the rear door and spare wheel removal is simple.

A cargo blind and roof rails are standard. The Grand Vitara has two 12V sockets on the dashboard and another in the cargo area. Fuel tank capacity is marginal for bush work, at 66 litres.



Driver and passenger comfort on mixed surfaces is first class, thanks to flat handling, quirk-free ride and supportive seats. The Grand Vitara has an excellent driving position, commanded from a height-adjustable driver's seat that has good lateral and lumbar support.

Suzuki has combined the class of leather coverings with a non-slip texture, so there's no sliding around the seats, even when the driver is pressing on a bit.

All controls are easily reached and the gated auto transmission lever works logically if notchily.

The Grand Vitara V6 is marred somewhat by an engine that needs to rev to do its best and a 'gappy' five-speed auto. With and without a load on board the little machine goes like hell and feels that it could do with even more grunt. Handling is flat and neutral through the twisties and the stability control system doesn't intervene before you've grown a smile on your face.

Only when the surface turns to stony gravel with corrugations does the Grand Vitara complain with a harsher ride, dashboard sizzle and some loss of directional precision.

Ground clearance for off road driving is the weak link of the Grand Vitara, which can climb where bigger machines can, but drags its underbelly over high points. The Suzuki's hill descent control works effectively to maintain safe speeds, even when wheels lift clear of the deck.

On and off road fuel consumption of the V6 worked out at thirsty 17.2L/100km. A diesel-powered Prestige model would be a real winner, we reckon.

## Previous Models

The Grand Vitara five-door wagon was released in mid-1998. Built like its Vitara predecessor on a separate ladder-frame chassis and fitted with low-range gearing, for serious 4WD work, the Grand Vitara was powered by a 2.5 litre, V6 quad-cam petrol engine or 2.0 litre, petrol fuel-injected double overhead-cam four-cylinder.

Buyers had the choice of a five-speed manual or four-speed dual-mode electronic automatic transmission.

Suzuki's 'Drive Select' 4WD system allowed changes between two and four-wheel-drive (high range) at speeds of up to 100km/h.

The Grand Vitara had a low-mounted spare wheel on a wide-opening rear door. Air-conditioning, central locking, keyless entry, immobiliser, power windows and exterior mirrors, AM/FM stereo CD player, driver's footrest and drink holders were standard. Five seats could be utilised in a number of combinations, including fully flat to make a bed.

Independent McPherson front struts combined with a coil sprung rigid rear axle, located by five links. Braking was ventilated disc/drum.

Prices for the Suzuki Grand Vitara started at \$28,950 for the four-cylinder, and \$30,950 for the V6. Automatic transmission added \$2000 to the price.

In July 2001 Suzuki launched the \$35,990 Suzuki XL-7, seven-seat version of the. Grand Vitara. The extra passenger capacity came from a 505mm-longer wheelbase.

The V6 engine was bored out to a larger 2.7-litre capacity, with an output of 130kW at 6200rpm and 231Nm of torque at 3300rpm. Final drive gearing was altered to maintain acceleration. ABS brakes were standard equipment on the XL-7, as were dual air conditioning, premium-grade sound system, power windows and door locks, power mirrors, keyless remote entry, engine immobiliser, height adjustable front and rear seatbelt anchors, tilt steering wheel, halogen headlights, rear wiper/washer, adjustable front armrests and 16-inch aluminium wheels. A four-speed automatic transmission was optional for \$1900.

A few months later and at the opposite end of the size scale, Suzuki re-introduced the Grand Vitara three-door hard top for a RRP of \$25,990, with air conditioning, power steering, electric windows and mirrors, dual SRS air bags, central locking, engine immobiliser, roof rails and CD player.

Suzuki's Grand Vitara and XL-7 ranges were given an interior makeover, including new dashboards and switchgear in early 2003 and in September, ABS was made standard across the entire Grand Vitara range.



The third-generation Suzuki Grand Vitara was released in September 2005, with more interior space and constant 4WD, featuring a torque sensing centre differential.

Operating modes were 4H, 4H lock and 4L. Another major design change was a move to independent rear suspension.

Prices for the Grand Vitara started at \$23,990 for the three-door, \$28,990 for the 2.0-litre 5 door and \$30,990 for the 2.7-litre V6.

Automatic transmission was an extra \$2000.



The Grand Vitara Prestige V6 automatic model was released in late 2006 with cruise control, leather steering wheel, leather upholstery and leather door panel trims, six-disc in-dash CD stereo with MP3 capabilities, speed sensing volume control as well as seven speakers, including sub-woofer, 17-inch aluminium wheels, fog lamps, side and curtain airbags, ABS with EBD, dual front SRS airbags, pretensioners and force limiters on front seatbelts, three-point ELR rear seat belts, keyless start function, power windows and mirrors, fuel consumption read out, climate controlled air-conditioning – all from \$36,990.



In late 2007, a 1.9-litre Direct Diesel injection System (DDiS) intercooled and turbocharged engine, producing 95kW at 3750rpm and 300Nm of torque at 2000rpm, was introduced.

Fuel consumption was a claimed 7.6 litres per 100 kilometres.

Turbo cooling was provided by an electric cooling pump, which ensured circulation of engine coolant even after the engine had stopped.

The engine was equipped with a Bosch CP3 common rail fuel delivery system with magnetic coil injectors. Rail pressure could reach up to 1600 bar. Euro IV emission control was by exhaust gas recirculation (EGR) and a diesel particulate filter (DPF).

## Bush Modifications

The Grand Vitara is civilised, but with a mean bush streak that makes it capable of handling long bush trips, but for serious off-road work needs some after-market help.

Suzuki has Grand Vitara accessories that include headlight protectors, weather shields, rear spoiler, running boards, cargo mat and tray, reverse parking sensors, nudge bar tow bar, roof racks and seat covers.

The new model has proved popular enough for after-market specialists to come up with steel 'roo bars and suspensions offering a much-needed lift between 35mm and 45mm.



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