

WHEELS



TEXT WENDY KNOWLER
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AT FIRST I COULDN'T FIGURE OUT WHY the shopping mall car guard was so excited. Then I realised his enthusiastic gesticulation had everything to do with the car I'd steered his way.

"Eez number one!" he shouted in a heavy French accent, kissing his fingers. "I never see such a car before, so nice – park here, here!"

The object of his admiration was the Suzuki Kizashi, the Japanese carmaker's first foray into the heavily contested category of medium-sized sedans. His response would have gratified Suzuki's designers – Kizashi is Japanese for 'Something Great is Coming'.

Known for its good quality, well-specified

It will get you from standstill to 100 kays in under eight seconds – nine seconds in the case of the auto.

There's also only one spec level to choose from, the SDLX, leaving the buyer with only one choice to make – manual or automatic. The manual costs R295 000 and the CVT (continuously variable transmission) costs R311 000. CVTs have been known to make engines produce some very annoying noises, but this is one of the more intelligent ones I've experienced.

It's all very sedate and refined on the inside, too. Roomy leather seats, both front ones electrically adjustable, sound system with USB, dual-zone climate control, steering wheel audio controls, park distance

control, and a gauge revealing real-time fuel consumption, which is a great incentive to go easy on the accelerator. What I couldn't find among all those gauges and gadgets was a simple clock. Odd.

Average combined fuel consumption is a claimed 7,9 litres per 100km for both models.

The Kizashi ticks a lot of boxes when it comes to safety – ABS with front and rear discs, electronic brakeforce distribution, traction control and six airbags, including side curtain airbags.

How does it drive? Very well – there's

no shortage of power; it's smooth, quiet, and very capable in the corners. Add a good-sized boot and this is most certainly a worthy contender in this segment. In fact, the Kizashi 2.4 SDLX manual has been selected as one of the 10 finalists for the South African Guild of Motoring Journalists 2012 Car of the Year award.

It comes with a three-year or 100 000km warranty and a six-year or 90 000km service plan.

If you're a mid-sized sedan customer and you're looking for something that's different, but boasting a badge with a good track record of quality, this is definitely worth a look. It's a great addition to the spoilt-for-choice line-up in the C-segment.



SOMETHING A LITTLE

D F E E T

compact cars, such as the Swift, and appealing 4x4s, Suzuki is now taking on the likes of the Toyota Corolla, Ford Focus, Honda Accord and VW Passat with its Kizashi. And it's sufficiently different to turn heads wherever it goes.

The Kizashi's most stand-out exterior features are without doubt its 18-inch multi-spoke wheels, and the bling exhaust surrounds.

For me, the wheels work, adding heaps of presence and character to the Kizashi, but those flash surrounds don't. Each to their own.

There's just one engine choice, a 2.4-litre four-cylinder petrol producing a racy 131kW of power and 230Nm of torque at 4 000rpm.