



2006 Suzuki Forenza Wagon by Rick Trawick



Many believe that Suzuki is relatively new to the automobile business, but thanks to their association with General Motors, Americans have been driving Suzuki cars and trucks for over 20 years. Many went by other names, like Sprint, Metro or Tracker, but they were Suzuki's all the same. In the next two weeks, we are going to look at a couple of their latest, first up, the Forenza Wagon.

It was not long ago when it looked as though the traditional station wagon was all but dead. Minivans had become the vehicle of choice for families, and these are now being supplanted by the SUV. Even with a full complement of SUV's in its lineup, Suzuki has a very nice offering in the Forenza Wagon. Station Wagons have several advantages over the minivan and SUV alternatives. Being car-based instead of truck-based, the wagon has a better ride and with a lower profile, gets better fuel mileage. For me, I just like driving a car better than a truck or van. And the Suzuki did not disappoint. The Forenza sports a new look for 2006 that is pleasant and unassuming. Not something that is going to be turning heads everywhere you go however. If you take a look at a



Forenza and its features, then check the price tag, you will be pleasantly surprised. With a price well under 20 grand, the Suzuki is really well equipped. The usual power windows and locks are complimented with an

AM/FM/CD and cassette player with 8 speakers, adjustable steering column and cruise control with switches where they are supposed to be, on the steering wheel. Other features include remote keyless entry, alloy wheels, heated power side mirrors and air conditioning with micron filtration. Safety features comprise four-wheel-disc brakes with anti-lock, front airbags with passenger detection and side airbags for the front seat occupants.



On the road, the Forenza is a competent handling car, not raising thoughts of blasting down back roads but instilling confidence with its sure-footed cornering. The 2 liter, 127 horsepower 4 cylinder engine pulls smoothly through the optional 4-speed automatic transmission. We would rather have the 5-speed manual in a small car but the automatic is more popular by far. With modern automatics, there is little or no penalty in the fuel mileage department so it is just a matter of personal choice. The EPA mileage estimates are an economical 21 city and 30 highway for the automatic and 22/30 for the manual. Certainly helpful with gas at 3 buck a gallon!

One of the best features of a wagon is its versatility. With the rear seats folded, the Forenza boasts over 61 cubic feet of space and over 24 cubic feet with the split folding rear seat raised. The large opening of the tailgate and low deck make loading easy. The seats don't quite fold completely flat but the 60/40 split makes it easy to mix people and cargo. There is also a retractable cover to keep items in the rear away from prying eyes.



All around, the Forenza looks to be a good choice for those looking for a small car but still need the space to carry their "stuff". Wagon pricing starts at \$14,399 and our Premium series test car carried a sticker of \$16,599. And Suzuki vehicles carry a 7 year, 100,000 mile powertrain warranty. Look for more information at www.suzukiauto.com.

Finally, a Contest Everyone Can Win!

Don't miss out on our latest contest! We are looking to make a significant increase in our readership. I know all of our faithful readers have told friends about the website, but sometimes they forget to sign up, or they loose the address or something. So to encourage everyone to talk us up and get their friends to subscribe, we are having a subscription contest. Here's how it works:



Every reader who gets two of their friends to sign up will get a free, one-year subscription to our print magazine when it is introduced. Yes, we are going to really have a print magazine you can hold in your hand, and when we do, you will receive the first year free! But don't stop there, sign up 5 or more people and you will get an official Cars & Places travel mug. And the top prize will go to the one person who signs up the most people, that special person will receive an embroidered Cars & Places jacket!

We have added a space on the subscription form called "How did you hear about us?", so make sure your friends put your name in that space! And no fair signing up your "other" email addresses!

Let's get started and spread the word! You only have from now until the end of May so get going!



Fuel For Less Than a Buck a Gallon?

Three dollars-a-gallon gas got you down? How about fuel for less than one dollar per gallon? Check out this website, www.dogwoodenergy.com. They publish plans for a nominal fee, which will show you how to construct a high-quality still to brew your own ethanol. The website gives a brief overview and detailed recipes. Have a diesel? Don't worry, Dogwood also sells plans and parts to convert used vegetable oil into high-grade diesel fuel!

Places to Be!

Don't miss the Maryland Sheep and Wool Festival at the Howard County (Maryland) Fairgrounds this weekend, May 6 and 7. In its 33rd year, the Festival will feature the Navajo Men Who Weave from the Navajo Nation Museum in Window Rock, AZ. As usual, visitors will be able to witness and participate in shearing, spinning, weaving and really almost every step from sheep to sweater. And the best part? Parking and admission are free! The fairgrounds are easy to get to, just off of Interstate I-70. Get directions and a schedule for a full weekend of events at www.sheepandwool.org.



Cars & Places is helping out with a local classic car and hot rod show! It will take place on June 18, Father's Day at the Maryland Sheriff's Youth Ranch on Maryland MD-80 about 3 miles south of I-270. It is open to all vehicles, including motorcycles, hot rods, classics and import tuners. Peoples choice trophies will be awarded and there will be food

and music. It will be a great time to share with Dad! Look for a complete schedule and directions coming on our website.

That's all for this week!

So until next time, enjoy your drive!

Rick Trawick

Publisher

Any comments or questions you may have are welcome. Please email them to info@carsandplaces.com. If you would like to see your event mentioned, send it to the same address.

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