

# Launch review: Suzuki's new Baleno. Heading up

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Heading up for sure. The folks at Suzuki must certainly be reasonably pleased with their sales efforts thus far. After all, Suzuki is one of Mzansi's fastest-growing car brands. It has won the coveted Brand of the Year Award twice, amongst others. Looking back, Suzuki has also enjoyed success with the Brezza, Swift and the much-adored Jimny brands.



Image credit: Naresh Maharaj

In support of its growing client base, this Japanese compact vehicle specialist is continuing to open new dealerships, now standing at 81. But before I get into the nitty-gritty of the launch test drive through the serene and scenic KZN Midlands, here are some quick take-outs of the Baleno:

- First in segment head-up display standard on GLX
- Unique 360-degree Round View Monitor unique in the segment
- Auto available in GL and GLX specification levels
- Spec boost for both specification levels



Image credit: Naresh Maharaj

## The future is now

Suzuki introduced the all-new Baleno to the world in February 2022 and shared its new design language called Crafted Futurism. Many of this design language's foundational elements, such as the mix of organic and dynamic lines, large and striking lights and a purposeful stance, are a refinement of the Liquid Flow design that was seen on the previous Baleno.

The design also applies to the new interior, where a multi-layered dashboard creates the impression of space. There are also more comfortable and contoured seats, which are both functional and visually appealing, and with higher-grade cloth upholstery.

## Suzuki Baleno GL – auto and manual

For the all-new model, Suzuki has added even more specifications to both the GL and GLX range, making it the uncontested luxury leader in its market.

In the Suzuki Baleno GL manual and automatic versions, Suzuki has added climate control with rear air vents instead of the previously used air conditioning system. The vents are mounted at the back of the new centre armrest with a storage box

between the front occupants.

The GL further benefits from the addition of electrically adjustable and foldable side mirrors, cruise control and three USB ports (a Type A port in front and a Type A and Type C port in the rear).

Other standard features on this model include remote central locking, rear parking sensors, a 12V accessory socket and of course the much-loved 7" full-colour Suzuki infotainment system with Bluetooth connectivity.

## Suzuki Baleno GLX – auto and manual

In the Suzuki Baleno GLX, the number of luxuries is boosted to a level previously unheard of in this segment including first-in-segment features such as a head-up display, a full 360-degree Round View Monitor with side, front and rear-mounted cameras that display a bird's eye view of the vehicle's surroundings when parking or manoeuvring at low speeds.

The GLX further has LED projector-style headlamps and LED daytime running lights and 16" polished alloy wheels. Inside the GLX model, there is a very long list of standard specifications. The new Head-Up Display offers an array of information from a pop-up screen that neatly retracts into the dashboard when not used.

The 7" infotainment system found in the Baleno GL models is further replaced with a high-resolution 9" system with Apple CarPlay and Android Auto. The system also has added Smart Vehicle Alerts and of course Bluetooth connectivity with steering controls.



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The GLX also adds additional interior lighting in the foot wells and luggage area, and puddle lighting in the doors, chrome detailing on the door handles and it replaces the standard ignition of the GL with a keyless system with a Start/Stop button.

To add to the already high safety credentials of the Baleno GL, Suzuki has added four more airbags (front side airbags and full-length curtain airbags) for a total of six. GLX buyers also receive privacy glass as standard, and the rear-view mirror dims automatically.

## Spaced out

The Suzuki Baleno remains one of the most spacious hatchbacks in its price range. Through the smart use of space and design, the luggage area can store up to 314 litres with a full-sized spare wheel fitted. With the 60:40 split seats folded forward, the available storage space jumps to 1,057ls.



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## Plenty power

Suzuki has also replaced the 1.4l petrol engine of the previous-generation Baleno with its popular and powerful K15B petrol engine with variable valve timing, multi-point fuel injection and 16 valves per cylinder. This engine, which is also used in the Suzuki-built Toyota Starlet, Urban Cruiser and Rumion, and in Suzuki models such as the Jimny and Ertiga delivers a sprightly 77kW at 6,000rpm and 138Nm of torque at 4,400rpm.

The Baleno weighs on average 10% less than its competitors and has an average 30% higher power-to-weight ratio. This, of course, helps both performance and fuel consumption.

We drove the Comrades Marathon route en route to Pietermaritzburg. The road twists and turns, goes up and down, with plenty of potholes. This meant constantly changing the gears to get the best ride of the Baleno. The gearbox changes from gear to gear were swift and smooth. Performance-wise, I was impressed with the average fuel consumption of 5.5l/100km, this from a five-speed manual transmission gearbox.

## Pricing

- 1.5 GL Manual R225,900
- 1.5 GL Auto R245,900
- 1.5 GLX Manual R275,900
- 1.5 GLX Auto R295,900

Sold with Suzuki's popular five-year/200,000km promotional mechanical warranty. This includes unlimited roadside assistance for the same period. Includes a four-year/60,000km service plan and an anti-corrosion warranty of six years and unlimited kilometres. 15,000km service interval.

## ABOUT NARESH MAHARAJ

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