

# Suburban Observer & Eccentric Automotive Showcase

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## CARReport



### Cute-as-a-button Suzuki X90: It's fun, fun, fun

By Anne Fracassa  
Avanti NewsFeatures

There's no question about it. The 1997 Suzuki X90 4x4 is radical.

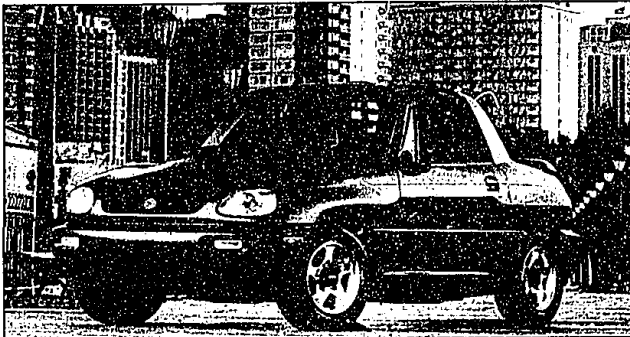
You wouldn't believe the amount of people who stopped to look at this really strange-looking multipurpose vehicle that may just be the cutest wheels on the road today.

Suzuki has always been known for its fun-to-drive vehicles. And for affordability. It's just that hardly anyone notices. Lots of people notice this car.

The Suzuki X90 is a two-seater with a T-top. It's really little. But not so little on the inside. You'd expect a skinny college kid would be the only demographic that would fit in the X90. Quite the contrary. Two portly adults can fit inside without knocking elbows or being uncomfortable.

On the outside, the X90 has really unique styling. There are rounded edges all around — including really pronounced bumper treatments. It looks like a sporty subcompact.

For Pete's sake, it's got a wheelbase of just 86.6 inches and its overall length is a measly 146 inches. I could



ROAD TEST  
By  
Anne Fracassa

fit six — maybe more — of these in my garage.

But looks are deceiving. The X90 sits high off the ground. It's not like a full-size pickup, mind you, but you could actively go off-roading and not have a care about running into any trouble.

The X90 is available in two models: The 2-wheel-drive and 4-wheel-drive. Both models are outfitted with a 1.6-liter 16-valve electronically fuel-injected 4-cylinder. The 5-speed is standard and the 4-speed auto-

matic transmission with over-drive is optional.

I drove the X90 outfitted with an automatic transmission and 4-wheel-drive. It handled well in most driving conditions and during hard cornering stuck to the road like glue.

There's a scant 95 horses powering the X90, so don't even think of drag racing with your sister in this one. Acceleration was slow, but consistent. The power/normal switch made little difference.

I had only one other complaint with the X90: It feels like those 95 horses are trying to buck you. It's outfitted with MacPherson struts. And the rear axle sits on coil springs with wishbone and trailing links. The X90 is small, but the ride really should be better.

I know, I know, Michigan's roads are awful (probably the worst of the whole country), but I actually got a headache from bouncing around the cabin so

much after one 55-mile trip. Enough about that.

The trunk was surprisingly large enough to hold just about anything you throw at it. With almost 8.5 cubic feet, even a mom could do a weekly shopping trip without a problem. And the X90 can tow up to 1,000 pounds — just about what a jet ski and trailer would be.

The interior looks nice and is fully carpeted. The seats are solid-color cloth and the inserts are a coordinating wild print that's also on the door inserts. And the center console holds two large drinks without a problem.

Everything from the radio to the heating controls in the center instrument panel are easy to reach. The radio controls are a bit tiny, but still, not at all hard to use.

One thing I did like was how quickly the X90 warmed the interior. The air circulation was

very efficient.

The X90 has all the creature comforts usually found in pricier models. Stuff like standard power windows and door locks, power steering, power brakes, dual outside mirrors, rear window defogger, locking fuel-filler door, tinted glass, tachometer, 2-speed intermittent wipers, stainless steel exhaust, a center console with dual cup holders, distinctive aluminum alloy wheels and 15-inch all-season radial tires.

The X90 4-wheel-drive models come equipped with all that and more: A security alarm system, automatic front hubs, 2-speed transfer case, Alpine AM/FM stereo cassette with four speakers and a remote key fob.

Safety has not been forgotten here. The X90 is outfitted with driver and passenger air bags, side impact beams, a rear spoiler with stop lamp, three-point seat belts and daytime running lights. Four-wheel anti-lock

brakes are an option on both models.

There are just four colors to choose from — black metallic, red, blue metallic and silver pearl. The blue metallic was really pretty.

The X90 is fun to drive, good on mileage and really neat to tool around town in. But it's really radical, dude, and it even makes GenXers do a double-take.

Anne Fracassa is senior editor of Avanti NewsFeatures. Tell her about your favorite car or truck on the road online at AVANTI1054@aol.com.

**1997 Suzuki X90**  
Vehicle class: Sporty multipurpose vehicle.  
Power: 1.6-liter 16 valve SOHC 4-cylinder engine.  
Mileage: 23 city 27 highway.  
Where built: Japan.  
Base price: \$13,619.  
As tested: About \$15,000.

### Sharing The Road With Trucks:

(NAPS) — Each year there are more than 200,000 crashes involving at least one passenger car and one large truck. Many of these crashes can be avoided if motorists knew about truck limitations and how to steer clear of unsafe situations involving trucks.

Here are some tips from the safety experts at the U.S. Department of Transportation that will help you understand the differences between cars and trucks so you can improve your road sharing skills and help reduce car-truck crashes.

The key to safer highways is to know the No-Zone. The No-Zone is the area around trucks where cars (1) disappear into "blind spots" or (2) are so close they restrict the

truck driver's ability to stop or maneuver safely. Both types of No-Zones greatly increase the potential for a crash.

While most people realize that it's more difficult to drive a truck than a car, many don't know exactly what a truck's limitations are in terms of maneuverability, stopping distances, and blind spots. So here's a handy rule of thumb:

Generally speaking, the bigger they are:

- The bigger their blind spots.
- The more room they need to maneuver.
- The longer it takes them to stop.
- The more likely you're going to be the loser in a collision.

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