

# OF THE YEAR 2003

## SUZUKI GRAND VITARA

Not a real alternative to a Freelander or RAV4, the Grand is a cheaper option because it's not that refined and the ride is harsher than it needs to be. The Grand was intended to appeal to youngsters who had grown out of the funster Vitara, so the styling is more conservative though it does retain good off-roading qualities.

The interior is well equipped but looks cheap, and although it's a five-seater it's cramped with a full complement of adults aboard so consider the rear bench as kids' territory. At launch only the V6 was available, nippy enough with a 0-60mph time of 10.6 seconds and an easy 100mph top speed, with automatic transmission optional. These were well-equipped with air-con and an electric sunroof as well as central locking, electric windows and a CD player, and have generally held their value well – a low-mileage '98 model will cost you upwards of £6500. The £200-£300 more for an automatic matters not because the manual is better for off-roading.

The turbodiesel that appeared soon afterwards is frankly a rough-running dull dog, economical to the tune of 40mpg, but this appeal fades against the need for 3000-mile oil changes. Even so, they've kept their value so if you must have one you'll pay over



£6000 for a '98 model, twice as much for a year-old example in pristine condition. Note that these lacked air-con and sunroof. Given the need for frequent attention, it's more important than ever to insist on a full service record on a turbodiesel. The petrol 2.0-litre version that appeared in '01 is a little quicker and more refined than the turbodiesel, and is good for 30mpg if driven sensibly, so worth considering at £10,000 for a low mileage car.

### RATING

PRICE RANGE	£6000-£13,000
ON-ROAD	●●●●●
OFF-ROAD	●●●●●
PRACTICALITY	●●●●●
AVAILABILITY	●●●●●
VALUE FOR MONEY	●●●●●

## TOYOTA RAV4

Despite its off-road pretensions the RAV4 was never intended to be anything other than a high-fashion high-street hustler. While the funky Toyota has perfectly good rough-trail and muddy-field competence through its permanent four-wheel drive system, there's no low-range gearing and ground clearance is a problem when the going gets rougher, so it's not even worth considering an old, battered one as an off-road funster. Look instead for something neat and tidy and enjoy the pose value, along with the RAV4's peppy and nimble road behaviour.

Though always sought-after, with values protected by dealers seeking to maintain the Toyota reputation for quality and reliability, the RAV4 is becoming more common on second-hand forecourts and prices are easing slightly. Expect to pay at least £5000 for a base three-door GX of '95 vintage, this model featuring twin lift-out sunroofs, electric windows, central locking and a stereo, with a five-door of the same age worth about £500 more. Look out of the Max special editions of '96, including air conditioning and a CD player, selling now at around £7000 on a P-plate. A top-spec VX appeared in 1997, with upgraded stereo, air-



con and leather trim, pay £8000 for an early example, up to £13,000 for one of the last of the first-generation models on a W-plate.

The latest model RAV4, from 2000, has a neater interior and enhanced road handling. Still expensive second-hand, the main point to watch is that the cheaper 1.8 NV model is front-drive only. Best value is the 2.0-litre NRG, electric windows, air conditioning, CD player and big alloys: £11,000 on a W-plate.

### RATING

PRICE RANGE	£4000-£17,000
ON-ROAD	●●●●●
OFF-ROAD	●●●●●
PRACTICALITY	●●●●●
AVAILABILITY	●●●●●
VALUE FOR MONEY	●●●●●