

A REFRESHING CAR!

By *Tim Saunders*,
Motoring Correspondent

Increasingly cars are being fitted with lazy automatic gearboxes no matter what the model. And so it is really pleasing to see a six-speed manual in the Fiat 500X Sport. This makes for a far more engaging driving experience.

When I first sit in the driving seat it feels like a giant was in it before me as I am sat very low down and struggle to see out of the windscreen. It doesn't take long to adjust the manually operated seat to my liking.

The Fiat is refreshing and has a character of its own. Externally it is finished in a bright blue and the designers have had a bit of fun with its styling, setting it apart from the bland competition. So often these days cars look and feel clinical but I like to see a personality shine through and the 500X has it in spades.

Previously I have been driving a VW Tiguan that overall was immensely irritating due to its oversensitive touchscreen, the fact that the heating and fan were operated by scrolling and the cruise control having a mind of its own. I like the design of the dashboard in the Fiat, which is easy to operate and has a good number of buttons and switches, scoring well with me. The Tiguan is a competitor to the 500X and although the

Italian feels perhaps a little less sophisticated, in terms of ergonomics the Fiat wins hands down.

Looking at the engine, I feel that Italy has trounced Germany. This fairly sizeable Fiat is a mere 1.3 litre petrol. Yet it is 150bhp, travels from 0 to 60mph in 9.1secs and has a top speed of 124mph. It generates 156g/km of CO2. It costs £28,785. This compares to the VW Tiguan R-Line which is a 1.5-litre with the same bhp. It is 0.1 of a second slower on the 0 to 60, has a 2mph faster top speed and travels 2 miles further on a gallon. It generates 9g/km of CO2 more than the Fiat and costs over £4,000 more but then it does have a large glass panoramic sunroof and a power boot lid that the Fiat does not.

I take it for a spin to Bedfordshire. Over the course of the 115-mile journey the ride is comfortable. It does feel smaller than the Tiguan.

The TomTom satnav is reliable but try as we might we cannot get it to talk to us. The cruise control is not as sophisticated either. The digital speed reading vanishes on occasions, which is a bit unsettling and fuel gauge drops far too quickly for my liking. I then realise it only has a 48-litre fuel tank, meaning that it will travel about 300 miles on a tank.

Founder and editor of 'Travel & motoring magazine', Tim Saunders is an advanced motorist and journalist. He has always been passionate about motoring and regularly reviews cars from the leading manufacturers.



FACTS AT A GLANCE

Fiat 500X SPORT FIREFLY TURBO 1.3 150HP

OTR price including options: £28,785

0 to 60mph: 9.1secs

Top speed: 124mph

Economy: 40mpg

Power: 150bhp

CO2: 156g/km

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