

Road test: Fiat 500X Sport

by Tim Saunders



Increasingly cars are being fitted with lazy automatic gearboxes no matter what the model. And so it is really pleasing to see a 6 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 over sensitive 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 amount 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.

FACTS AT A GLANCE

Fiat 500X Sport Firefly Turbo 1.3 150HP

OTR price including options: £28,785

Top speed: 124mph

0 to 60mph: 9.1secs

Economy: 40mpg

CO2 emissions: 156g/km

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.

We live in extremely challenging times and car manufacturers must pull out all the stops to help the environment. I feel that Fiat has tried hard here, especially when considering this is the sports model. It stands to reason that the standard models should be more environmentally friendly.

It is fun to drive even if the gearbox is not always as decisive as I might wish.

I take it for a spin to Bedfordshire. Over the course of the 115 mile journey the ride is comfortable. 'It's quite compact,' Caroline says. It does feel smaller than the Tiguan.

The TomTom satnav is reliable but try as we might 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 the 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 when full. I'm used to being able to travel at least 500 but obviously the tanks are larger. For instance in the VW Tiguan there is a 64 litre fuel tank. For me this is quite a negative as it does force the driver to fill up far more frequently.

Watch the videos at www.testdrives.biz

Tim has just had two books published: A Book of Short Stories and Poems for Today (TA Saunders) available as ebooks and paperbacks from Amazon.



Henry (5) looks under the Fiat 500X while Harriett (10) looks mesmerised and Heidi (8) assesses the colour.