

Road test: Fiat Tipo Sport

by Tim Saunders



The older you get the more you realise that life is full of compromises; from where

you live to what you drive. Ignore this fact at your peril.

And so it is with the Fiat Tipo Sport, the £18,000 warm family hatchback. It will propel you from standstill to 60mph in a shade under 10 seconds and on up to 124mph should you find yourself on a German autobahn trying to escape Covid-19...

When worked hard the engine gives a beautiful rasping complaint. There are a great many mod cons as standard such as all round electric windows, air con, cruise control, flash alloys, sat nav and even a reversing camera. But there are no power folding wing mirrors or heated front seats. Ah, the compromises. But to woo that prospective buyer back the Fiat incorporates style and panache missed by others; just feast your eyes on the leather edged seats with their interesting raised fabric inserts. And it's a fun driver's car; one that warms to all the family.

Driving a petrol car always seems to be more responsive than a diesel and generally less noisy. Its six speed manual gearbox is smooth and there's a good driving position certainly enhanced by the welcoming leather steering wheel.

Behind that steering wheel there is a button for searching radio stations on the left and the volume is on the right, helping to keep the driver's concentration on the road. There's a welcome traditional

handbrake. That TomTom sat nav is difficult to operate and I can't get it to work. The engine start/stop ensures that the engine cuts out when at traffic lights, helping to save fuel. The cruise control is reliable within a few mph of the desired speed and there's a speed limiter, too. Henry (4) discovers that the boot is large enough to hide in; it's certainly on the more generous side. The helpful reversing camera comes into its own during the school run on a Monday morning. Parking is a nightmare but I spy a space and am able to parallel park without any scrapes whatsoever thanks to the camera.

Externally, the Fiat is finished in a delightfully sophisticated shade of grey that is quite unusual, really making the car stand out so much so that drivers of considerably more expensive vehicles feel compelled to double take. Hints of sportiness include the low front bumper complete with fog lights and the distinctive 18" inch Mopar wheels. The low profile tyres together with the sports suspension deliver quite a hard ride. The children and I like this but it's not my wife's preference. There's a good amount of room for the three rascals in the back and enough legroom for Harriett (9), who seems to wake up taller each day. It won't be long before she's looking down on me.

Trips to Alresford and Winchester allow me to put the Tipo through its paces. Avoiding the motorway we opt for the country

lanes and have much more fun. It holds the road well.

Overall it is a well built and attractive five-door family hatchback.

Watch the videos at www.testdrives.biz

FACTS AT A GLANCE

Fiat Tipo 1.4-litre Sport

New price: £18,070

0-60mph: 9.6secs

Economy: 38mpg

Power: 120bhp

Top speed: 124mph

CO₂ emissions: 162g/km

