



Fiat 500

Everyone's Favourite

Car review | Fiat had hoped that new 500 might catch on. Reality has exceeded even their wildest expectations. An enormous presentation from the homeland of the Fiat 500 formed the starting point for an unprecedented sales success. The car is now available for its first, extensive test drive. Is the new Fiat 500 really so good or is its success due solely to its image?

Right in the middle of the motorway, a car slams on its brakes. The window goes down and a mobile appears. The Fiat 500 has been spotted and "papped". In traffic-jams, the test driver is regularly greeted with encouraging looks and thumbs-ups. At a petrol station, the cashier even leaves their desk to take a closer look at the 500. In short: the new Fiat 500 has gone down well with the public.

Nostalgia

It's not just its appearance that makes the car so attractive. Of course, the new Fiat 500 is a refreshing reincarnation of the legendary and successful car of years gone by. But there is more to it. With the new 500, the driver is able to personalize it even down to the smallest detail, allowing them to create their very own 500.

The test car is decorated with an Italian flag on the bonnet and roof. Even on the indicators and the floor mats, the Italian tricolour keeps recurring. The dashboard and the door panels are finished in the

same brown hue as the half-leather seats. The driver can even choose the print on the ignition key to their own taste.



Modernism

Even though the exterior has a strong resemblance with its predecessor, the interior has been restricted to a retro feeling. The lay-out of the dashboard is completely different than that of the former 500;

moreover the character is different. Of course, it is possible to achieve something similar using all the necessary colours and motifs from the sixties. However the test car responds to the desires of the modern driver. Air conditioning, electric windows and an on-board computer are all present.

One option is the Blue & Me. This system connects the mobile telephone and mp3-player to the car. Via Bluetooth, the mobile and the car can connect to each other simply, allowing the mobile to be used with verbal commandos (in English of course!). Text messages can even be read out loud by the computer.



Unfortunately, it wasn't possible to connect the iPod. Blue & Me has been developed by Microsoft, who want nothing to do with the products of its competitor, Apple. CDs or mp3 files on USB memory stick can however be played without a problem. The sound of the audio system is quite considerable for a car of this segment.

Space

In contrast to initial rumours, the 500 is definitely no three-seater, but a normal four-seater. The space in front is good, even for the taller driver. However, it is noticeable that the seats are placed high. In reality, the promised adjustable height solely changes the angle of the seat base. The steering wheel is adjustable in height, but not in the distance to the driver. The space on the back seat is limited; children up to 1m50 can sit without any problems.



On the inside, there is little storage space to be found. The various compartments, that are available, are small and cannot be locked. The cup holders are only suitable for mini cans and cups. The luggage space is deep and strong (185 litres).



Sport

As one would expect, the presentation is perfect but it does all revolve around the driving characteristics. The test car is equipped with a 1.4 litre four cylinder petrol engine, which is good for 100 bhp. There are now twice as many cylinders as in the original model with a multiplicity in its capacity! But the new generation is significant larger and heavier, which means that this surplus is no superfluous luxury.

Even more so since the car initially reacts heavily to the accelerator. Is some of that hundred horse power still lurking in the stable? The 500 does make headway, but its heart isn't really in it.

Fortunately, the Sport-button does offer a solution. In Sport-mode, the engine reacts more attentively to the accelerator and its performances are considerably better. Now, the 500 feels perfectly at home on the

motorway. 120 km/hr is a pleasant speed, even though it can go faster. It is claimed that the top speed is 182 km/hr, however that is only achievable going downhill, with the wind behind you. Due to the sixth gear, the 500 is very economical and pleasantly quiet for such a car.



City car

In the city the car feels entirely at home. Here the 500 is smooth and lively. However, watch out for those sleeping policemen, as the nose is very low. Whereas Fiat provides some cars with impossibly small external mirrors, the 500 has lovely large reversing mirrors. Consequently the car has a great overview, and from the very first moment you just feel so at home in the 500.

This is due to the steering. In the non-sport mode, the 500 steers exceedingly light, which is pleasant in the city. In the sport-mode, the steering wheel gives accordingly more feeling. This makes the car feel more stable when it's on the motorway. The suspension is firm and consequently road handling (read: safety) is outstanding. Just like its illustrious predecessor the new Fiat 500 has an extremely dexterous steering and can nip in and out super quickly between all the other cars.



Conclusion

There is no possible doubt: the reincarnation of the Fiat 500 is admired by both friend and foe. The car attracts unprecedented attention; the writer of this article has never felt so popular. At every stop, people were spontaneously doling out compliments. Everyone wants to take a photograph; everyone wants to just sit in the car; and of course everyone wants to know if the car really does drive as nicely as it looks.

Now that the car available is for longer test-drives, that ultimate question can also be answered. The Fiat 500 drives better than the majority of the other small cars. The test driven 1.4 litres petrol engine is quicker and more economical than any of its competitors with similar engines. Performance is outstanding, the brake capacity is very good and the steering is razor sharp. If this is all available at the same time in such an attractive package, the success of the Fiat 500 is more than deserved (Ivo Kroone). ■



Specifications

Fiat 500 1.4 16v Sport

Size and weight

Length x width x height	355 x 163 x 149 cm
Wheelbase	230 cm
Kerb weight	930 kg
Trailer	500 kg
Trailer - braked	800 kg
Fuel capacity	35 l
Luggage space	185 l
Tyre size	185/55R15

Engine and performance



Capacity	1368 cc
Cylinders / valves	4/4
Max power	100 PS @ 6000 rpm
Max torque	131 Nm @ 4250 rpm
Drive	front wheels
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	10.5 secs
Top speed	182 km/h
Average mileage	6.3 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	8.2 l / 100 km
Mileage extra urban	5.2 l / 100 km
CO2 emissions	149 gr / km

Price

Price	Â£ 10,700
Price base model	Â£ 7,900