

HERE 4 MOTORING

FIAT 500 S

By Tim Barnes-Clay, Motoring Journalist

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They say "small is beautiful", and the petite FIAT 500 is no exception to that much used turn of phrase.

The revised car went on sale in the UK in 2014 with new style, comfort and technological enhancements. A fresh feature is the seven-inch digital instrument display, which combines cutting-edge technology without disrupting the trademark aesthetics of the cabin.

Standard on the 500 S 0.9i (105ps) TwinAir model, on test here, the centre of the instrument display can be configured to show various trip computer readouts, such as distance travelled, instant fuel consumption and range.



In addition, the screen reconfigures when the Sport button is activated on the 103bhp powered car. The 'eco' gauge, which measures how efficiently the FIAT is performing in real time, transforms into a turbo-boost gauge, emphasising the dual-personality of the fun-but-frugal engine.

I did feel slightly annoyed when I first climbed into the FIAT and slammed my knee against the centre console, but I'm a six foot tall chap and it's a small car. What did I expect? Well, I didn't anticipate it to be so lush inside – that's for sure. The funky cabin soon made me forget about my aching knee. Actually I completely forgave the 500 S for causing me pain once I started her up.

On the move, the feisty Italian is a genuine giggle to drive because the TwinAir engine is 'rev-happy' with a decent amount of 'go', thanks to the turbo bolted to it. Top speed is a surprisingly fast 117mph and 0-62mph takes 10 seconds. This is more impressive than some 1.2 and 1.4-litre four cylinder petrol engines.

The ride can be a little too firm over bumpy surfaces and this causes handling to become slightly jittery, but other than that the FIAT 500 S does a great job. It's actually more practical than I thought it would be too. The rear bench takes two child seats without any problem, and when my wife borrowed the car to take our toddler to nursery she raved on afterwards about how easy it was to manoeuvre in the manic crèche car park.

Reassuringly, the FIAT 500 range achieved a maximum five-star rating in the gruelling Euro NCAP crash test safety programme. When it accomplished this, it was the first time that a car of such compact dimensions, (3.5 metres in length), had achieved a top ranking, and astonishing that a vehicle of its type had been equipped with seven airbags as standard.



In fact, the FIAT 500 S offers general levels of equipment more usually associated with cars of a far higher segment, with anti-lock braking, remote central locking, electric front windows and door mirrors, as well as electric power steering. The car also has mobile phone connectivity, air conditioning, 16 inch alloy wheels and a very useful 50:50 split/folding rear seat with head restraints.

What's more, the FIAT 500 personalisation programme offers a range of over 100 bespoke accessories which, generating more than 500,000 possible trim, colour and option combinations, gives you the opportunity to personalise the model in ways you never thought possible! At just £13850 on the road for this particular 500 S variant, you really can't go far wrong if madcap, funky motoring is your cup of tea.

PROS 'N' CONS

- Funky ✓
- Speedy ✓
- Fun ✓
- Firm ride X

FAST FACTS

Max speed: 117 mph
0-62 mph: 10.0 secs
Combined mpg: 67.3
Engine layout: 875cc 2 cylinder 8v petrol
Max. power (bhp): 103
Max. torque (lb/ft): 107
CO2: From 99 g/km
Price from: £13,850