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Fiat 500C – Road Test

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Fiat 500C convertible... summers are for...

By Robin Roberts (Miles Better News Agency).

For any car to be a true success is remarkable, but to do it twice is, well, sensational.

There is no doubting the fact that the Fiat 500 has been an unqualified double success, first launching in 1957 and then reborn fifty years later.

Since 2007 a staggering two million Fiat 500 models have been built in Fiat's Tychy, Poland plant and it's spawned some 30 special editions to keep the icon as fresh as possible. This year, the Fiat 500 enjoyed its best Q1 sales with 60,000 registered across Europe. So, Fiat must be doing something right and meeting demand for this visual classic.



Essentially there are now nearly 40 models in the line up with standard or long-wheelbase versions, normal and sporting derivatives from about £11,750 to over £21,240.

There are plenty of models from which to choose with 900cc or 1.2 petrol as well as 1.3 diesel engine choices, and our new 500C convertible for this summer is right on the mark with very attractive two tone paint and fabric roof, and inside the latest Apple and Android Uconnect to mobiles.

I like the busy twin-cylinder 900cc versions of the Fiat 500 but the 1.2 really gives it legs for longer journeys and is much less stressful thanks to flexibility and lower noise levels. It's a good starter and revs freely while the light clutch and slick five-speed gearbox work well but sometimes, just sometimes, I wished for an additional gear to stretch that economy still



further and past the 50 mpg mark. So close and yet so far.

You cover ground fairly respectably and it's a doddle to park with normal or city mode steering, good brakes underfoot and a light throttle. Visibility is ok but you lose a bit over the shoulders, much more with the folded hood on the rear boot, and rear three-quarters, while the lights could be brighter. Front wash and wipers are good.

The Fiat 500C has a firm ride with softer edges when cornering but you can really push it into bends and recover quickly and safely if things get a bit busy.

Along with the major controls, the secondary stalks and buttons were generally conveniently placed once you became familiar with them although the touchscreen can be a minor distraction and best set up and left alone before you move. The integrated comms system means you can audibly command functions and take messages, and is a good facility to use.

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I found the oddments space was reasonable with big door and seat-back pockets, some smaller trays on the centre console and a useful sized glovebox.

The powered hood is simple and effective with a wind and waterproof seal for rainy days. It's appreciated by an owner who values the ability to have skyscraper headroom on sunny days and an igloo car in winter. Choosing the 500C over its similar coupé companion will add approximately £800 to the price.

There is good access and room for two, although it's a more awkward and tight fit in the back pair of seats, and the boot capacity is small but suitable for a soft bag – and can be extended with seatbacks dropped.

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VERDICT

I like the Fiat 500C for what it is and how it performs and there is no doubt that in a market where so many cars are nearly identical in so many ways, the Fiat 500C stands out, which explains its success, twice over.

For: Easy to use convertible, compact and agile, well equipped, economical, good seats, a member of the iconic Fiat 500 family.

Against: Tight in back and small boot, some engine noise, stiff ride.





Mini Milestones and Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

Fiat 500C, convertible, 1.2 litre, two door.

Price: £16,640, (other versions priced from £14,460).

Engine/transmission: 1.2 litre, four cylinder, 69 hp petrol with five speed manual gearbox

Performance: 99 mph, 0-62mph 12.9 seconds.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 60.1 mpg (47 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 110 g/km, VED First Year rate £145 then Standard rate £140, BiK company car tax 23%.

Insurance Group: 11U.

Warranty: Three years/60,000 miles.

Dimensions: L 3.58 m (11.75 ft), W 1.63 (5.35 ft), H 1.49 m (4.89 ft), boot 182 litres (6.43 cu.ft), two doors/four seats.