Fiat 500L Trekking

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Tom Scanlan reports…

Fiat's 500L Trekking is one of three bigger types of 500, alongside the 500L and the longer 500L MPW (Multi Purpose Wagon).

The idea behind the Trekking is to hint at its potential to be a car that is ideal for the countryside, without compromising its performance in the city. It could perhaps be described as purposeful, rather than pretty like the 500.

It has, therefore a raised ride height, all-season tyres, new tough-look bumpers, underbody protective shielding and Fiat's Traction+ system; this last is not 4-w-d, but it is a system that sends torque to the wheel that's grounded, not to a wheel that's lifted off; it also proves useful when starting off with one wheel in the wet and one in the dry; Traction+ does not compromise fuel efficiency and full power is always available. It operates up to almost 19 mph at the press of a button on the dashboard. You still get the normal electronic stability control.

There is a variety of models under the 500L name and Trekking is at the top of the price range. Two petrol engines and two diesel engines are on offer: the little 0.9-litre TwinAir Turbo, with 105 bhp, the 1.4 95 bhp petrol and the 1.3 and 1.6 diesels.

I drove the 1.6 MultiJet diesel. With a six-speed manual gearbox, it claims a combined fuel consumption of 60.1 mpg, with CO2 emissions of 122 g/km (£95 annual road tax) and performance that takes the car from 0-62 mph in 12.0 seconds to a top speed of 109 mph.

The Trekking proved to be extremely easy to drive and comfortable to travel in, allowing the driver quickly to feel completely at home. The ride is excellent; the handling is fine, the steering is on the mark, neither too light, nor too heavy. The brakes stop the car very well and there is the added standard feature of Fiat's City Brake Control; similarly to other car maker's systems, radar detects a car ahead (should for some reason the driver does not) and automatically applies the brakes and stopping the car without contact, or at least only relatively minor contact, at speeds from 3 to 18 mph. Under test conditions, this is slightly un-nerving to experience, but impressive and worth asking your dealer if you can try it out. (Like other systems, it will not detect a child or a motorbike.) In fact, apart from impressive braking performance, the car has a remarkable string of the latest safety features on board, all aiming to prevent an accident due to loss of traction or some form of loss of driver control.

The car is easy to manoeuvre, especially with the help of the standard rear parking sensors. With its forward driving position and plenty of glass, exterior visibility is very good. This is an important safety consideration, of course, but it also helps to give the vehicle a pleasant ambience. The amount of space adds to this. This Fiat is very easy to get into and out of, especially at the rear. It's one of few cars that claim to be five-seaters that can actually live up to that claim; however, the 'man-or-woman- in-the-middle' of the rear seat will be less comfortable than others in the back, thanks to less foot space.

For luggage, the boot proves to be usefully versatile and, with Fiat's easy Fold&Tumble action for the rear seats (that can also slide backwards and forwards) and a folded front seat

items up to 2.4 metres in length can be stowed onto a completely flat floor. The tailgate is easy to shut one-handed.

Fiat offers a whole range of exterior colours, including the £850 optional choice of a black or white roof, along with a good choice of interior materials, colours and specification. Other options range from a £50 rear view child view mirror, to upgrading to automatic dual zone climate control (£300), to an electric sun-roof for £950.

On-the-road prices range from £17,095 up to £19,590 for the test car (that also had options raising the price to £22,240). The test car was in insurance group 15.

VERDICT

Overall, then, a comfortable, spacious, versatile and easy family car.



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Fiat 500L Trekking 1.6 MultiJet Diesel

Drivetrain: Front engine, front wheel drive
Engine: 1598cc double overhead camshaft, 16 valve four cylinder direct injection turbo diesel
Power: 105 PS @ 3,750 rpm
Torque: 320Nm @ 1,750 rpm
0–62 mph: 12.0 seconds
Top speed: 109 mph
Fuel consumption, ‘official’ figures:

‘Urban’: 50.4 mpg

‘Extra urban’: 68.9 mpg

‘Combined’: 60.1 mpg
Actual figure achieved during our road test: not recorded

PRICE (‘On The Road’): 1.6 litre MultiJet: £19,590
Warranty: 3 years/60,000, two years unlimited.