

## ROAD TEST



Deliberately crude styling adds to the 'utility look'. Panda has always been in high demand, particularly in Europe

**FOR:**

**UTILITY**

**ECONOMY**

**AGAINST:**

**STABILITY**

**REFINEMENT**

# CIVILISATION OF THE SPECIES

The Fiat Panda was designed as a basic utility car. The 1000S we tested proves that while the car retains its utility, it is now not quite so basic

If one permits a partly inappropriate metaphor, Fiat's Panda 1000S is a leopard which has tried to change its spots. You have only to look at its deliberate crudities of style — the flat windscreen, the body panels which look (but aren't quite) flat, the Mini-recalling turned-outward body seams along the roof sides lightly disguised as drip rails, the unrelieved angularity and high upright build — to realise that it was originally conceived by Fiat in principle and Giugiaro in execution as the Italian reply to the 2CV and R4.

If the only Panda we had known since its birth six years ago (described in *Autocar* of 23 February, 1980) had been the original 30 model with its air-cooled vertical twin (ex-126, if modified), there would be no identity problem. But even during the original Panda's four-year gestation, Fiat realised that while there was an obvious market in Italy for a car designed unashamedly for utility, there was an even larger one elsewhere in Europe for something a little

better. Hence the Panda 45, with the 903cc water-cooled four of the 127.

The 45, however, retained most of the basic Panda's basic-ness. Although the car has sold well — over 1.4 million Pandas of all breeds had been built by the end of 1985 — it was felt that customer expectations had risen further since 1980, and that some worthwhile improvements could be made and production rationalised. The new Panda range is undeniably a large if not entirely satisfactory step forward on all fronts, with more comfortable suspension, and the incorporation of the now two-year-old Fully Integrated Robotised Engine ('FIRE') in its original 999cc form, with a new 769cc version replacing the air-cooled twin in the base car. It is the Panda 1000 which shows up the attempt to provide a more civilised top-range model, which in the S-form tested here has conventional, less space-efficient seats, and a generally less minimal standard of equipment than its predecessor.

## PERFORMANCE

The same power and 25 per cent more torque maybe, but what happens to the bigger Panda's weight? Looking back at the *Autocar* Road Test (13 June 1981), kerb weight for the previous car was 1663lb (754 kg); the new one with half-full tank scales a hefty 117lb — 7½ per cent — heavier. This is in spite of the weight saved in the engine (at its September 1984 introduction, Fiat claimed this to be the lightest in its class), and one cannot help suspecting the new rear suspension, more conventional seats and better equipment as major reasons.

In refinement, the Panda 1000 has one potentially great advantage over its predecessor — an overdrive five-speed gearbox. One has to say "potentially", because given the car's still quite reasonable power-to-weight ratio and that 1-litre-class-leading low and mid range power, one is tempted to think that it could take more of an overdrive than it has.

The gearing of fourth and fifth in fact straddle the 5000 rpm power peak at their mean maximum speeds — 88 mph at 5450 rpm in fourth, and 87 at 4600 in fifth. Ideally of course, fourth, which is presently a considerable 9 per cent under-gear, should be geared higher to provide the car's ▶



Fiat idea, Giugiaro execution

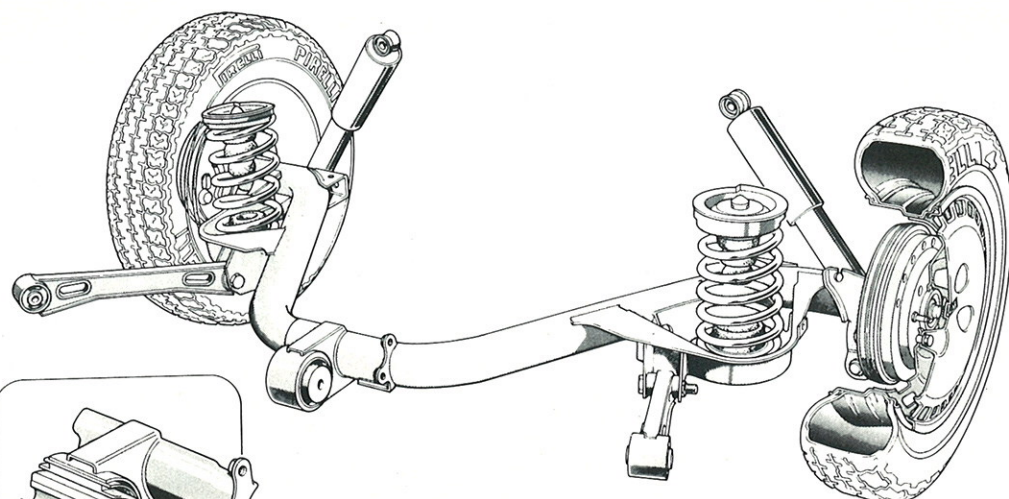


## FIAT PANDA 1000S





# ROAD TEST



## TECHNICAL FOCUS

Most obvious of the new Panda's technical changes is the adoption of the FIRE power unit, whose design features are worth briefly recalling. Although its specification — single overhead camshaft, five crankshaft bearings, aluminium alloy cylinder head — sounds quite exciting, the keynote is simplicity, ease of making, and low weight. An overhead camshaft lends itself to simpler design of course, if you accept the small extra complication of its more remote drive. Castings are interesting to the production as well as the mechanical engineer, with automation of both the iron and aluminium alloy casting processes, an ingenious new skinned polystyrene way of providing destructible internal cores, and consequently closely controlled wall thicknesses for optimum strength and weight. The state of tune is mild, with the same 45 metric

horsepower as its 903cc predecessor, produced however lower down, at 5000 instead of 5600 rpm, but over 25 per cent more torque — 59 instead of 47 lb ft — turned out at 2750 instead of 3000 rpm.

The coil spring suspension remains strut independent in front, but along with the use of much of the floorpan of the Lancia Y10 comes the radically different rear suspension from the same source. In place of the first very simple dead axle located by semi-elliptic two-leaf springs on each side, the new Panda has the Y10's ingenious but simple 'Omega' axle. In this, the back wheel hub carriers are linked by a tubular 'axle' which, instead of running straight across, curves forward in a great U, the apex of which carries a bracketed central pivot bush anchoring it to the floorpan.

That, broadly speaking, looks after longways location, the job

being finished by trailing arms pointing inwards from their body pivots. The cup-like pressings carrying the bottom end of the springs are welded with extra side bracing into the inside of each outer bend of the axle, where it straightens before each hub carrier; these spring carriers, therefore, reinforce the tube to reduce any toe-out tending deflection under braking. Inboard of these carriers, the tube is relatively unbraced, so that to a small degree it can twist, allowing some independent suspension movement of one wheel relative to the other — but what torsional stiffness it has provides some rear anti-roll stiffness to offset front-drive understeer. This also offers less unsprung inertia than the old dead axle, while, depending on how stiff the tube is, preserving track and toe-in and avoiding the plain axle's leaf-induced roll oversteer.

absolute maximum speed with the engine on or very close to its power peak rpm. Fifth, which is at present only a mild overdrive in which its maximum speed occurs at 8 per cent below the power peak, could clearly be higher.

The differences in performance figures taken in near-similar weather between the new Panda 1000 and the old 45 are interesting. Remember that maximum power is claimed to be very nearly the same — the 45 PS of the old car was measured according to the recently superseded DIN standard, where the new car's numerically identical output was done to the even stricter new EEC measure which is said to be roughly equivalent to a 3 per cent higher DIN horsepower, which in this case is a little over 1 PS.

There is accordingly little advantage in top speed — the new car is 2

mph faster than its 2½ per cent overgeared predecessor. But it gets to 50 mph 0.9secs quicker, and, largely because of the effectively lower fourth gear, to 80 over five seconds faster. Although at first sight it has a slightly higher ratio, the lower peak power speed makes all first four gears in effect a little lower on the new car. That combined with the much more lusty mid range delivery means that the Panda 1000S is usefully quicker in acceleration in all those gears.

This spread of power is very obviously experienced by the driver who is feeling lazy about changing down and asks the engine to pull away from a lower speed than is ideal — it does so pleasingly easily, except from the lowest reasonable engine speeds when the carburation is poor by the standards of contemporary rivals, the unit not pulling or even running at all

smoothly under gentle throttle below 1250 rpm. The carburettor and engine combination also disappoints in cold start behaviour, being unduly sensitive to the right degree of mixture enrichment for the right length of time, although the ability to start is reliable.

Subjectively, the acceleration figures are backed up excellently; it feels a delightfully eager performer, and is mostly very willing to respond by class standards. The engine is lively once warm, and Italian in character, and is matched in this case by a pleasant gearchange (the change on our 750 is not so sweet).

## ECONOMY

The inviting character of the big Panda's performance has a correspondingly depressing effect on the car's economy. If you succumb to temptation, as we have to confess we

did, or run the car a lot on motorway or fast roads near the top end of its performance, its aerodynamically uncompromising shape and highish frontal area do not help, and it was under these circumstances that we saw the worst interval consumption, of 31.2 mpg. But with more modest driving, it is not at all difficult to see 37 to 40 mpg, or better still depending on how restrained one is. At 8.8 gallons, the fuel tank is nearly 14 per cent larger, and gives a range of between 270 and 350 miles. It fills tolerably easily; we liked the neat filler cap design. Oil consumption was not measurable during the test.

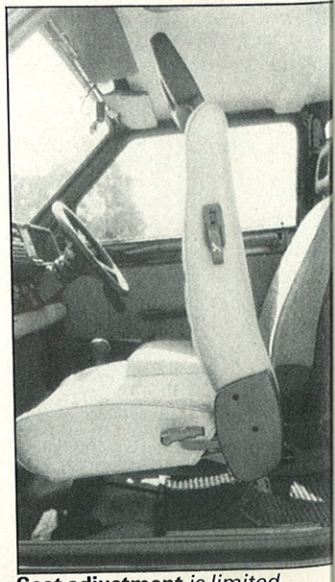
## REFINEMENT

By the standards of small Italian cars, and especially by those of utility models internationally, the FIRE unit is tolerably smooth; but it is by no means a quiet engine, and together with the high road noise suffered in the Panda, makes cruising at speed no luxury. As suggested already, the Latin nature of the engine is clear. Running lightly, it is pleasingly civilised and quiet enough, although the test car has second and third gears that tend to chatter a little when pulling hard at lower speeds. Wind noise is relatively well controlled except where the fresh air vents at each end of the dashboard are concerned; these are noisy.

## ROAD BEHAVIOUR

After the harsh ride of the old Panda, the deportment of the new one is a great improvement in comfort. As Fiat cheerfully admitted at the car's launch, the sharp bumpiness of the previous Panda which sometimes caused the rear to hop has largely gone. Although not in the same class as the French contenders, the new Panda has an acceptable ride by the standards of most other light, small cars.

Its steering is adequate. Heavy at parking speeds, it lightens pleasantly once you get going, and with 3.4 turns for a 31ft turning circle, it is reasonably geared and quite responsive



Seat adjustment is limited



# FIAT PANDA 1000S

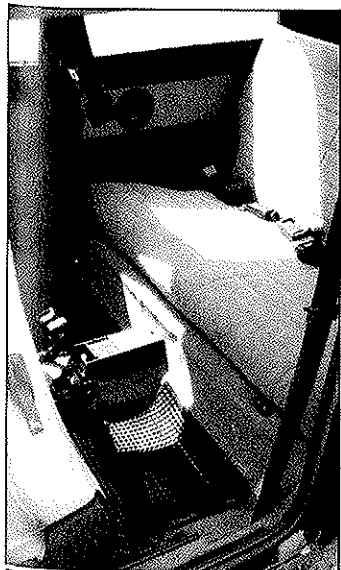
There is some appreciable bump steer and wander on an uneven road taken rapidly, however. At higher speeds and cornering rates, although basically quite safe, the car screws curiously, wandering slightly as it goes into its small degree of roll, and continuing to do so as long as the cornering load is high; it feels as if it is being generated at the rear, and since it is present on both the 1000 and 750 models tried, one cannot help suspecting that the curious rear wheel location is responsible in allowing some toe change under hard cornering loads. The Panda notices side winds considerably, and overall it is not such a precise and totally stable-feeling car as one expects from today's front-drive machines.

The handling balance is typical front-drive: understeer, with no more than a tucking-in reduction in it if you lift off the accelerator in a bend taken fast.

Brakes are well up to the job, in both response and fade resistance. The car's comparatively low weight makes certain that no servo is needed to allow low pedal pressures even for maximum braking (around 1g for 65lb pedal effort). The handbrake works well enough by front-drive standards, although two-up, the car drags its locked back wheels when facing down the 1-in-3 test slope.

## AT THE WHEEL

Driving position is tolerably comfortable for shorter sizes of driver, thanks to a reasonable seat which has back rake adjustment; it must be criticised, however, on behalf of 6ft or taller drivers for whom there isn't enough rearward adjustment or, more seriously, enough room between steering wheel and pedals — enforcing a splayed knees posture and making heel and toe changes needlessly difficult. On long runs, the position of the accelerator pedal becomes uncomfortable, because one's right foot has to be kept nearer to a right angle with the leg than is usual due to the combination of pedal placing and how close one has to sit to



Rear legroom is reasonable

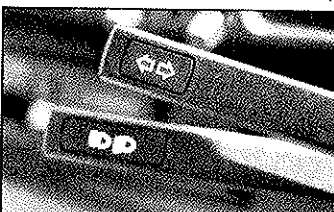
the controls. A resting left foot is not encouraged to stay to the left of the clutch pedal because of the shape of the floor, but there is room under the pedal instead. There is good headroom for taller drivers, which is not something that can be said for all cars today.

Minor controls and switches are well done. Once again, it is very pleasing to find another car in which the horn switch is placed in its ideal position — in the middle of the steering wheel — where it can always be found and used quickly in an emergency, in contrast to the less ideal stalk type. Stalks are conventional European standard left-hand-drive, with signalling on the left and front wiper-wash on the right. The neatly designed pod of switches, heater, and instruments — speedometer with non-trip mileometer, fuel and temperature gauges plus a conventional clock — mimics much more pretentious cars in its quite comprehensive warning lamp display, which places each indicator in its appropriate place on a simple outline plan view of the car.

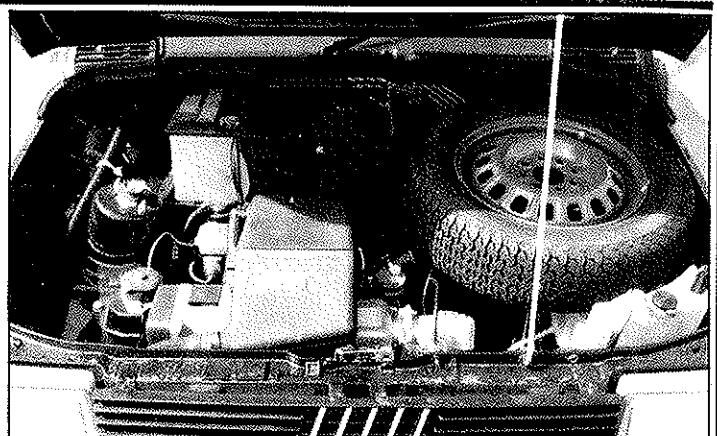
View out is generally good, the shortness of the car helping parking. The single wiper for the windscreen is retained, its pivot a few inches to the (British) driver's side so that the usual 'triangular' upper corner of unswept glass is worse on the passenger's side, while still irritating to the driver in some circumstances. Fiat continues its sensible compromise in wiper speeds for its cheap cars, first seen on the 128, of providing a single relatively fast continuous speed and an intermittent setting. The image in the interior mirror, however, vibrates into a blur at speed just when it is most needed, unlike the door mirrors, which on the S are mechanically adjustable from inside.

## CONVENIENCE

When the Panda was announced, Fiat and Giugiaro adopted Issigonis' ideals, talking of building the shortest car — well, fairly short, remembering that the Panda is 13ins longer than a Mini, but 7ins shorter than a Fiesta — with a maximum of internal space. Although not succeeding quite as brilliantly as the Mini, for an 11ft 2ins long, 85ins wheelbase, two-box car the Panda is not a bad effort in true space-efficiency if, as the tall driver does on the Mini, you accept an imperfect leg position. Applying the test of sitting behind a front seat adjusted for a 6ft driver, room in the back demands knees splayed each side of the front seat, and a slumped spine, to take the head out of touch with the roof.



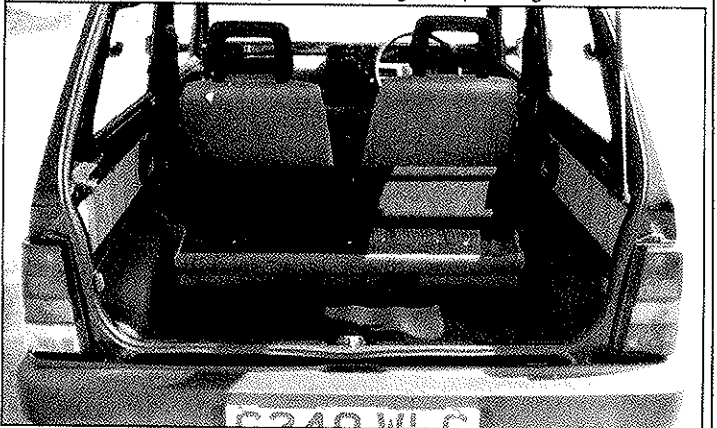
Stalk controls are conventional



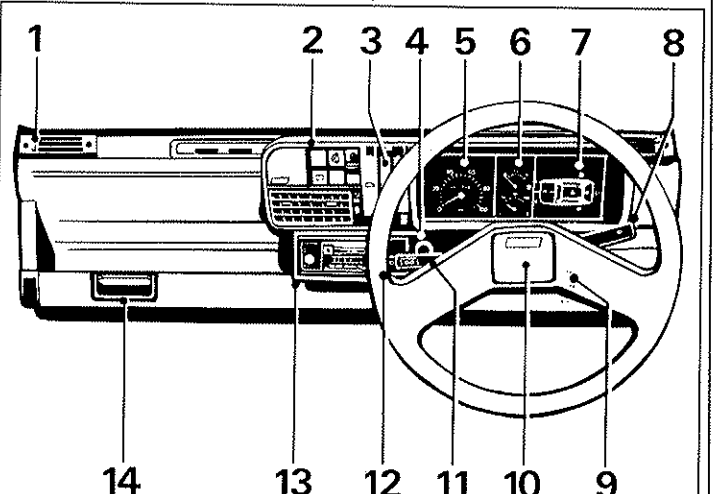
The 999cc FIRE engine is an eager performer by class standards



Minor controls and switchgear are thoughtfully arranged



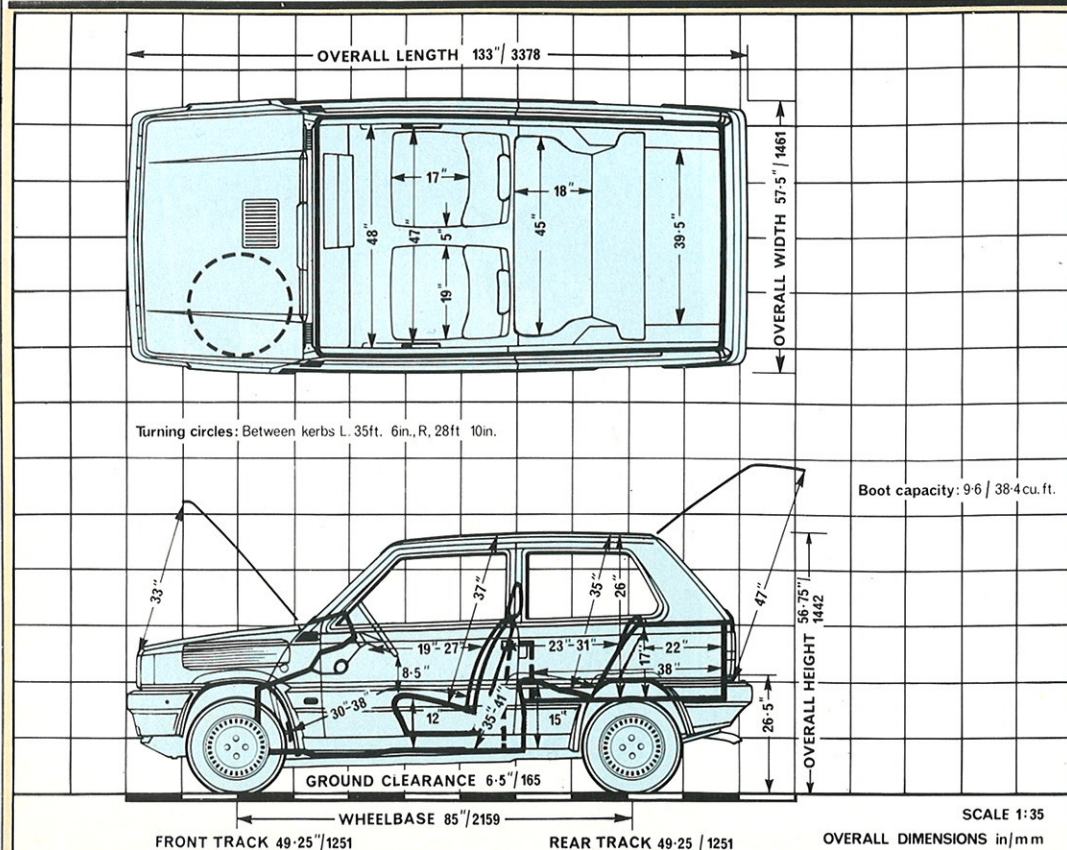
Boot space can be enlarged by folding flat rear seat back



- 1 Air vent, 2 Ancillary switchgear, 3 Heater and temperature controls, 4 Cigar lighter, 5 Speedometer, 6 Fuel and water temperature gauges, 7 Check warning lights, 8 Stalk for windscreen wash/wipe, 9 Ignition and steering lock, 10 Horn, 11 Stalk for indicators, 12 Stalk for headlights, main/dipped beam, 13 Stereo radio cassette, 14 Sliding ashtray.



# ROAD TEST



## MODEL

### FIAT PANDA 1000 S

#### PRODUCED BY:

FIAT S.p.A., Corso Marconi 10,  
10125 Turin, Italy.

#### SOLD IN THE UK BY:

Fiat Auto (UK) Ltd,  
Bakers Court,  
Bakers Road,  
Uxbridge, Middlesex UB8 1RG.

## SPECIFICATION

### ENGINE

Transverse front, front-wheel drive.  
Head/block al. alloy/cast iron.  
4 cylinders in line, bored block, 5 main  
bearings. Water cooled, electric fan.

**Bore** 70mm (2.756in), **stroke**  
64.9mm (2.555in), **capacity** 999cc  
(60.96 cu in).

**Valve gear** ohc, 2 valves per  
cylinder, toothed-belt camshaft drive.  
**Compression ratio** 9.8 to 1. Contact  
breaker ignition, one Weber  
down draught fixed choke 32 TLF 6/250  
carburettor.

**Max power** 45bhp (PS-EEC) (33kW)  
at 5000rpm. **Max torque** 59lb ft (80  
Nm) at 2750rpm.

### TRANSMISSION

5-speed manual. Diaphragm spring,  
single dry plate clutch, 6.69in dia.

Gear	Ratio	mph/1000rpm
Top	0.837	18.82
4th	0.978	16.10
3rd	1.344	11.72
2nd	2.056	7.66
1st	3.909	4.03

Final drive: hypoid bevel, ratio  
3.867.

### SUSPENSION

**Front**, independent, coil springs,  
struts, lower wishbones, telescopic  
dampers.

**Rear**, semi-independent, coil  
springs, U-shaped torsion beam axle  
and trailing links, telescopic dampers,  
anti-roll function of axle.

### STEERING

Rack and pinion. Steering wheel  
diameter 14 1/4in, 3.4 turns lock to lock.

### BRAKES

Dual circuits, split front/rear. **Front**  
8.937in (227mm) dia discs. **Rear**  
7.283in (185mm) dia drums.  
Handbrake, centre lever acting on rear  
drums.

### WHEELS

Pressed steel, 4in rims. Pirelli P8  
tubeless radial tyres (on test car), size  
155/65SR13 73S, pressures F29 R29  
psi (normal driving).

### EQUIPMENT

Battery 12V, 40Ah. Alternator 45A.  
Headlamps 80/90W. Reversing lamp  
standard. 12 electric fuses. 1-speed,  
plus intermittent screen wipers.  
Electric screen washer. Water-valve  
interior heater. Cloth seats, moulded  
headlining. Carpet floor covering.  
Screw pillar jack; One jacking point  
each side. Laminated windscreen.

## PERFORMANCE

### MAXIMUM SPEEDS

Gear	mph	km/h	rpm
Top (Mean)	87	140	4600
(Best)	88	142	4700
4th (Mean)	88	142	5450
(Best)	89	143	5550
3rd	77	124	6550
2nd	53	85	6900
1st	28	45	6900

### ACCELERATION

True mph	Time (sec)	Speedo mph
30	4.2	33
40	6.8	43
50	11.1	54
60	16.0	65
70	24.0	76
80	42.4	87

**Standing 1/4-mile:** 20.2sec, 67mph  
**Standing km:** 38.2sec, 79mph

### IN EACH GEAR

mph	Top	4th	3rd	2nd
10-30	—	13.5	8.7	4.5
20-40	14.2	11.1	7.1	4.6
30-50	14.1	10.7	6.5	6.4
40-60	15.3	11.7	8.9	—
50-70	19.4	15.1	14.2	—
60-80	35.2	26.3	—	—

### CONSUMPTION

#### FUEL

**Overall mpg:** 34.0 (8.3 litres/100km)  
7.48mpl

#### Constant speed

mph	mpg	mph	mpg
30	74.5	60	46.6
40	65.4	70	37.9
50	56.1	80	31.8

**Autocar formula:** Hard 30.6mpg  
Driving Average 37.4mpg  
and conditions Gentle 44.2mpg  
Grade of fuel: Premium, 4-star (97 RM)  
Fuel tank: 8.8 Imp galls (40 litres)  
Mileage recorder: 11.1 per cent long  
**Oil:** (SAE 10W/30) negligible

### BRAKING

**Fade** (from 88mph in neutral)

**Pedal load for 0.5g stops in lb**

start/end	start/end
1 30-40	6 40-50
2 30-35	7 35-55
3 30-58	8 35-52
4 35-65	9 40-60
5 35-50	10 45-55

**Response** (from 30mph in neutral)

Load	g	Distance
20lb	0.20	151ft
30lb	0.46	65ft
40lb	0.62	49ft
50lb	0.81	37ft
65lb	1.02	29.5ft
Handbrake	0.3	100ft

**Max gradient:** 1 in 4  
**CLUTCH** Pedal 16lb; Travel 5 1/4in

### WEIGHT

**Kerb** 14.8cwt/1663lb/754kg  
(Distribution F/R, 59.9/40.1)  
**Test** 18.4cwt/2063lb/936kg  
**Max payload** 882lb/400kg

## COSTS

### Prices

Basic	£3162.00
Special Car Tax	£263.50
VAT	£513.83
<b>Total (in GB)</b>	<b>£3939.33</b>
Licence	£100.00
Delivery charge (London)	£155.00
Number plates	£20.00
<b>Total on the Road</b>	<b>£4214.33</b>
(excluding insurance)	
Insurance group	1
<b>Total as tested</b>	<b>£4214.33</b>

### SERVICE & PARTS

Change	Interval	6000	12,000	24,000
Engine oil	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Oil filter	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Gearbox oil	No	No	Yes	Yes
Spark plugs	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Air cleaner	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
C/breaker	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Total cost</b>		<b>£22.89</b>	<b>£70.87</b>	<b>£90.99</b>
(Assuming labour at £18.40 an hour inc VAT)				

### PARTS COST (inc VAT)

Brake pads (2 wheels) front	£18.11
Brake shoes (2 wheels) rear	£17.49
Exhaust complete	£144.61
Tyre — each (typical)	£41.11
Windscreen	£64.99
Headlamp unit	£35.70
Front wing	£18.31
Rear bumper	£51.30

### WARRANTY

12 months/unlimited mileage, 6-year  
anti-corrosion

### EQUIPMENT

Ammeter/Voltmeter	N/A
Automatic	N/A
Economy gauge	N/A
Fivespeed	●
Power steering	N/A
Rev counter	N/A
Headrests front	●
Heated seats	N/A
Height adjustment	N/A
Lumbar adjustment	N/A
Rear seat belts	●
Seat back recline	●
Seat cushion tilt	N/A
Seat tilt	N/A
Folding rear seats	●
Door mirror remote control	●
Electric windows	N/A
Heated rear window	●
Interior adjustable headlamps	N/A
Sunroof (manual)	£145
Tinted glass	●
Tailgate wash/wipe	●
Cigar lighter	●
Clock (analogue)	●
Fog lamps rear	●
Internal boot release	N/A
Locking fuel cap	N/A
Luggage cover	●
Metallic paint	£61.00
Radio/cassette	DO
Aerial	DO
Speakers	DO

● Standard ONC Optional at no extra  
cost N/A Not applicable † Part of  
option package DO Dealer option

### TEST CONDITIONS

**Wind:** 9-16mph  
**Temperature:** 18deg C (64deg F)  
**Barometer:** 29.65in Hg (1005mbar)  
**Humidity:** 47per cent  
**Surface:** dry asphalt and concrete  
**Test distance:** 600miles  
Figures taken at 1600 miles by our own  
staff at the Motor Industry Research  
Association proving ground at  
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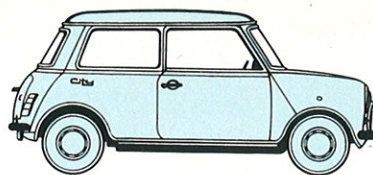
# THE OPPOSITION

## AUSTIN MINI CITY

£3726

Recent improvements to the Mini City's basic 27-year-old design include new instrument layout, better ventilation and revised steering wheel. But even these cannot disguise the fact that the Mini is now really starting to show its age, particularly in terms of ride, refinement and performance. The A-plus engine, however, is reliable and economical

Tested (City E)	3 Jul 1982
ENGINE	998cc
Max Power	40bhp at 5000rpm
Torque	50lb ft at 2500rpm
Gearing	18.8mph/1000rpm
WARRANTY	12/UL, 6 anti-rust
Insurance Group	1
Automatic	£751
5-Speed	N/A
Radio	DO
Sunroof	N/A
WEIGHT	1387lb



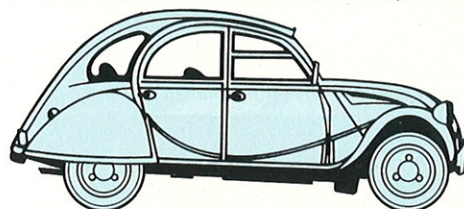
TOP SPEED	86mph	MPG	40.6
0-60mph	17.5secs	Range	300 miles

## CITROEN 2CV CHARLESTON

£3470

Forty years on and you can still remove the doors, seats and wings with the turn of a screw. Capable of 70mph in ideal conditions, with excellent fuel economy and plenty of space for four plus luggage. The looks may not be to everyone's taste, and it can hardly be called refined, but it is the simplicity and endearing character of the 2CV which have ensured its survival for so long

Tested (Special)	11 Jun 1986
ENGINE	602cc
Max Power	29bhp at 5750rpm
Torque	29lb ft at 3500rpm
Gearing	12.59mph/1000rpm
WARRANTY	12/UL, 6 anti-rust
Insurance Group	1
Automatic	N/A
5-Speed	N/A
Radio	DO
Sunroof	●
WEIGHT	1290lb



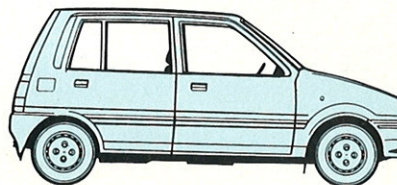
TOP SPEED	68mph	MPG	37.8
0-60mph	31.7secs	Range	250 miles

## DAIHATSU DOMINO

£3995

Nippy performance, excellent visibility and ultra-compact size make the updated Domino a useful and enjoyable town car. Its steering is light and the gearchange slick, but lack of mechanical refinement at anything much over 50mph really makes it impractical for longer journeys. Accommodation inside is adequate for up to four people, but severely restricted for luggage or oddments

Tested	16 Apr 1986
ENGINE	846cc
Max Power	44bhp at 5500rpm
Torque	50lb ft at 3200rpm
Gearing	17.88mph/1000rpm
WARRANTY	12/UL, 8 anti-rust
Insurance Group	2
Automatic	N/A
5-Speed	●
Radio	●
Sunroof	N/A
WEIGHT	1362lb



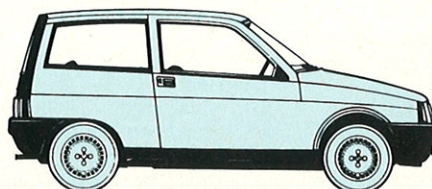
TOP SPEED	85mph	MPG	37.2
0-60mph	14.7secs	Range	230 miles

## LANCIA Y10 FIRE

£4330

Lancia breaks new ground with its compact but slightly unorthodox-looking Y10. In 1-litre guise, fitted with the FIRE engine, it is primarily intended as a town car but, if our experience is anything to go by, it should also prove quite capable of covering longer distances comfortably enough. Economy is a strong point, though price is on the high side alongside these rivals

Tested	22 Jan 1986
ENGINE	999cc
Max Power	45bhp at 5000rpm
Torque	59lb ft at 2750rpm
Gearing	21.3mph/1000rpm
WARRANTY	36/UL, 6 anti-rust
Insurance Group	3
Automatic	N/A
5-Speed	●
Radio	DO
Sunroof	N/A
WEIGHT	1717lb



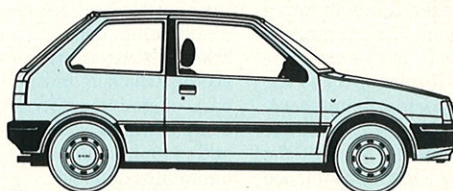
TOP SPEED	88mph	MPG	40.6
0-60mph	16.7secs	Range	420 miles

## NISSAN MICRA 1.0

£4099

This is the smallest car produced by Nissan, but has many of the qualities of far larger ones. All-alloy, single overhead camshaft engine gives brisk performance with excellent economy. Ride is not outstanding, and handling can be upset on poor surfaces by rear suspension location. Loading is easy, with low hatchback sill. Good equipment levels

Tested	N/A
ENGINE	988cc
Max Power	50bhp at 6000rpm
Torque	53.5lb ft at 3600rpm
Gearing	16.2mph/1000rpm
WARRANTY	36/100,000, 6 anti-rust
Insurance group	4
Automatic	N/A
5-Speed	N/A
Radio	DO
Sunroof	DO
WEIGHT	1455lb



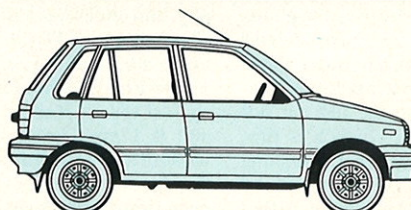
*TOP SPEED	87mph	**MPG	45.2
0-60mph	N/Asecs	Range	400 miles

## SUZUKI ALTO GL

£3899

Suzuki's facelifted Alto offers a compact, flexible runabout. Lacks refinement, the characteristic roughness of its three-cylinder power unit being heard and felt as soon as the engine fires up. Considering its simple suspension specification, the Alto behaves reasonably on a wide selection of road types and surfaces. Split rear seats fold down to offer a useable cargo space

Tested (Auto)	28 May 1986
ENGINE	796cc
Max Power	40bhp at 5500rpm
Torque	43lb ft at 3000rpm
Gearing	13.68mph/1000rpm
WARRANTY	12/UL, 6 anti-rust
Insurance Group	2
Automatic	£351
5-Speed	N/A
Radio	●
Sunroof	N/A
WEIGHT	1425lb



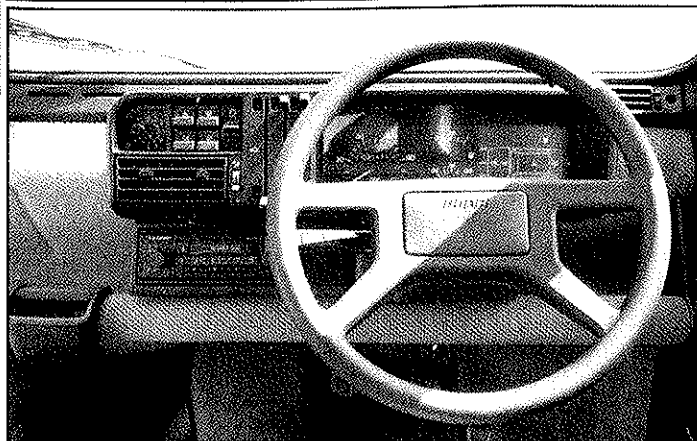
TOP SPEED	79mph	MPG	35.0
0-60mph	24.4secs	Range	230 miles

● Standard N/A Not applicable DO Dealer Option \* Manufacturer's figures \*\* European Legislative Average

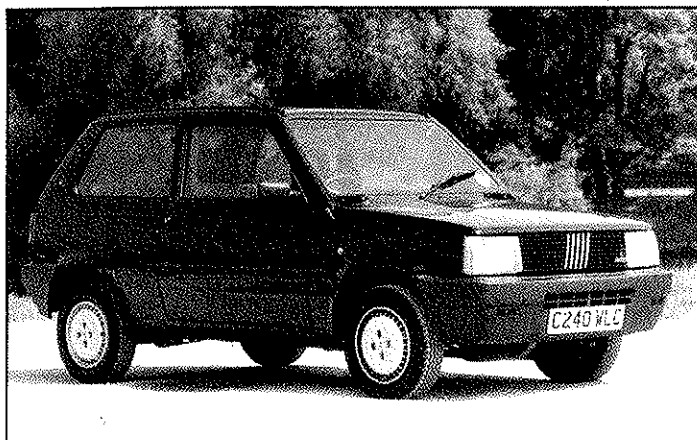


# ROAD TEST

# FIAT PANDA 1000S



Dashboard layout is good, with horn placed in centre of wheel



Large glass area allows good all-round vision when manoeuvring

◀ The 'posh Panda', if one may call it that, differs considerably from today's basic and the original one in its adoption of conventional seats, which deny it the quite unusual versatility of the thin, loose fabric seating of the 750L. You can't provide a short double bed, or what used to be suggested as a crude hammock for a baby; in the light of the more strict contemporary thinking about positively retaining the infant, perhaps that doesn't matter too much, although to be fair, Fiat now calls it a hammock for 'fragile objects', which is reasonable. You can still convert the S model into a little station wagon, like any modern hatchback, in two ways — either by folding the rear backrest on to the rear cushion, or, for maximum space, rolling the folded rear seat complete through another 90deg against the front seat, to which it is then attached with a Velcro strap. Since this is the most frequently needed of any hatchback's roles, it serves more than adequately.

Generally, the 1000S is an agreeably convenient car to use, and points of criticism are few. The heater suffers from the usual water valve complaints of poor temperature control, the system on the test car not shutting off entirely, which is tiresome in summer weather. Opening the hatch would be improved by providing some sort of handle, so that one does not have to start by pulling at the lip formed in the middle of the bottom edge of the door where one's

fingers inevitably also pull at part of the flexible seal. Besides being bad for the seal, this feels quite repulsive. Most serious of the Panda's small failings is its remote bonnet release, which, presumably because of too light a cable or weakness in the linkage, is appallingly flimsy and needs to be pulled very hard to release the catch, so that it feels as if it might break every time you use it.

## SAFETY

The Panda is, in spite of its middling steering and straight stability, a dynamically safe little car, with sufficiently good steering response, roadholding, handling and excellent brakes. It also allows good all-round vision, which is most important as part of active safety. Passively, it compares quite well with most cars in and around its class within the limitations of its size.

## VERDICT

Considered against the obvious French *crudités*, the Panda is nearest to the Renault 4 in size and philosophy, and undercuts it slightly in price. The Renault 4GTL shows its age in its much more pedestrian performance — the Fiat gets to 60mph in 16secs against the 25.7secs of the Renault, and is 17mph faster in top speed, without having a significant economy disadvantage. The inevitable 2CV6 is even slower, but is also more economical and nearly £1000 cheaper, which will make all the difference for some buyers. It more than matches



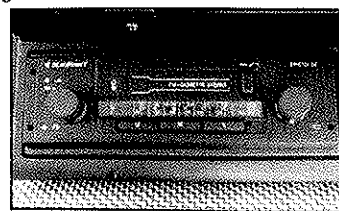
Flush-fitting wheel trims are neat and an aerodynamic aid



Upright build and angularity of design are considered chic

the Fiat in versatility with the facility to remove rear seats altogether, and has that loping, long-travel ride which makes it by far the best car for rough going — but its outrageously odd body design leaves it even more dated than the Renault in view out of the car, and in several features of its controls and appointments.

One can also see the 1000S version as a sort of competitor for more serious cars, like the bottom end of the supermini brigade. The car will appeal here mostly on price grounds — it is between £185 (Metro City) and £1310 (Toyota Starlet GL) cheaper, but may be seen in such company as a trifle *gauche* in its styling, plus — the more serious deficiency — not quite up to the mark in stability and steering. ■



Radio/cassette is standard



Rear wash/wipe is standard

# STANDARD SURPRISE

**The smallest FIRE engine may lack cubic inches, but the Panda 750L is more than capable of holding its own. We look at Fiat's base utility car**

**A**utocar's recent acquisition of what is in Britain the base model of the Panda range provided an opportunity not to be missed of testing both ends of the new (two-wheel-drive) Panda range. Figures were taken on the same day, with the same laden weight, in what were therefore as closely as possible identical conditions; both cars had near enough the same mileometer readings.

The 750L is nearer to the original Panda idea of a basic utility car for the Italian equivalent of the typical Frenchman who buys the 2CV or R4, as was its Panda 30 forerunner. But unlike the 30, the 750L has the tremendous mechanical advantage of a thoroughly modern — indeed effectively brand new — four-cylinder, water-cooled, single-overhead-camshaft, oversquare (65x58mm), 769cc engine and accompanying transmission, producing 34 PS at 5250rpm in place of the previous base car's 30 PS 652cc, air-cooled vertical twin. The new power unit is of course a variant of Fiat's Fully Integrated Robotised Engine range, and shares with the 999cc FIRE motor of the Panda 1000 the same connecting rods, main bearings, valve gear, bearing caps, sump and distributor, but besides its own crankshaft and

pistons, has a unique cylinder block, valves and manifolds. Its sophistication is a major reason why, in contrast to the Panda 30, we in Britain are able to buy the smallest-engined Panda.

In many ways, the 750L is the most acceptable Panda, in that its less pretentious specification obviously places it much closer to the original idea of the car — a modern utility car in the Italian idiom. It is amusing then that while Fiat may appear to be trying hard to add a bland pan-European sophistication to its cars, here is yet another example of how the delightful Latin Adam will out. We point out in the accompanying full Road Test how the Panda 1000 Super out-guns and out-runs the R4 and 2CV6 — and so it is rubbing it in somewhat to see that the 750L, in spite of having a considerably smaller engine than the Renault 4GTL, is still 8mph faster and 5secs quicker to 60mph.

Its kerb weight, 2cwt (225lb to be exact) less than the Panda 1000S tested, is at 1438lb a major reason for its performance advantage. Considered subjectively regardless of cold figures, the Panda 750 is a remarkable performer. It goes delightfully, with a *brío* that belies its modest capacity, and is capable enough of holding its own in town traffic, and giving a good

account of itself in the wide performance-diminishing wastes of a motorway. Naturally, the performance in such a low power-to-weight ratio car is more subject to the load carried; the car reasonably enough notices the difference between one and two-up.

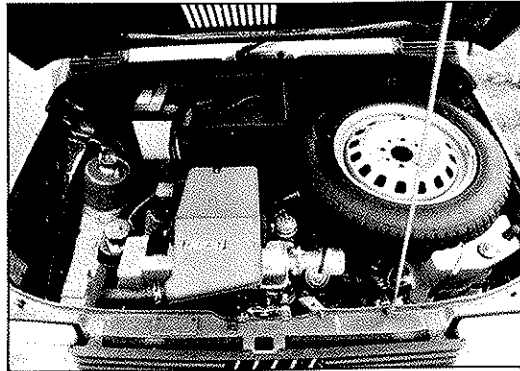
It is, however, interesting to see how much economy is improved by the use of the smaller engine in the same bodyshell, even if weight is reduced by both the smaller engine and lower standard of equipment. The 750 demonstrates once again that down-sizing alone does not bring proportionate reductions in practical thirst, due to the human element.

The engine may be smaller, but it tends to be driven harder for more of the time, so that things tend to even out in fuel consumption. Even though the 750's overall test consumption was taken over 1529 miles, which is nearly three times the test distance for the 1000S, it still works out, after correction for a notably optimistic milcometer, at 35.5mpg, only 4½ per cent better than the 1000S. We experimented over one journey distance in which both cars were driven at near enough the same speed in the same conditions, to see more accurately how they might compare if run gently at up to 70mph; the result was revealing — 36.1mpg for the 750, 37.3 for the 1000.

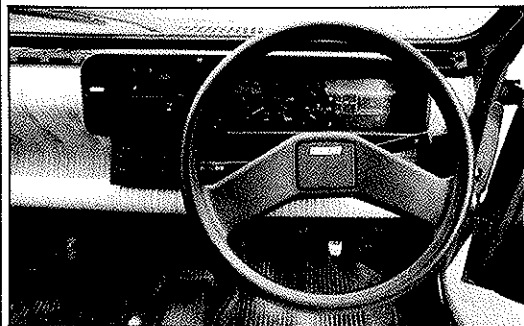
Our comments on handling and stability for the 1000S apply equally here. The lower standard of equipment and its greater seating versatility are acceptable over short journeys, if not so comfortable over longer trips when the steel framing of the front seats becomes a little obvious. In general, however, the 750L is an entertaining little car which with its *chic* plainness, surprising performance and general usefulness will win many new friends ■



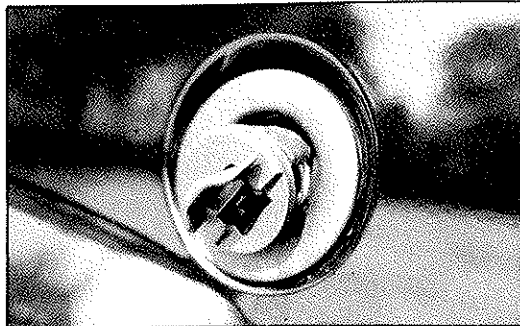
Panda easily holds its own on motorways



Performance: remarkable despite modest output



Dashboard design is basic but easily readable



Fuel filler cap is unusual; it unscrews

## SPECIFICATION

As Fiat Panda 1000S except:

### ENGINE

Bore 65mm (2.56in), stroke 58mm (2.28in), capacity 769cc (46.9 cu in). Compression ratio 9.4 to 1. Max power 34bhp (PS-DIN) (25kW ISO) at 2250rpm. Max torque 42lb ft at 3000rpm.

### TRANSMISSION

4-speed manual.

Gear	Ratio	mph/1000rpm
Top	0.978	15.04
3rd	1.344	10.95
2nd	2.056	7.16
1st	3.909	3.76

Final drive: helical spur, ratio 4.231.

### TYRES

Radial ply tyres (on test car), size 135/55R13.

### EQUIPMENT

Rubber mat floor covering.

## PERFORMANCE

### MAXIMUM SPEEDS

Gear	mph	km/h	rpm
Top (Mean)	79	127	5250
(Best)	80	129	5300
3rd	72	116	6600
2nd	47	76	6600
1st	25	40	6600

### ACCELERATION

#### FROM REST

True mph	Time (sec)	Speedo mph
30	3.8	33
40	7.5	44
50	13.2	54
60	20.6	65
70	40.4	76
80	—	87

Standing ¼-mile: 22.1sec, 61mph

Standing km: 42.4sec, 71mph

#### IN EACH GEAR

mph	Top	3rd	2nd
10-30	17.3	10.0	5.7
20-40	14.7	9.4	6.4
30-50	16.1	10.3	—
40-60	19.3	14.3	—
50-70	34.1	—	—

### CONSUMPTION

#### FUEL

Overall mpg: 35.5 (8.0 litres/100km) 7.81mpl

#### Constant speed

mph	mpg	mpl
30	71.6	15.8
40	64.9	14.3
50	53.5	11.8
60	43.9	9.7
70	35.9	7.9

Autocar formula: Hard 32.0mpg  
Driving Average 39.1mpg  
and conditions Gentle 46.2mpg  
Grade of fuel: Premium, 4-star (97 RM)

CLUTCH Pedal 20lb

## COSTS

Prices	
Basic	£2801.00
Special Car Tax	£233.42
VAT	£455.16
<b>Total (in GB)</b>	<b>£3489.58</b>
Licence	£100.00
Delivery charge (London)	£155.00
Number plates	£20.00
<b>Total as tested</b>	<b>£3764.58</b>
(excluding insurance)	