



More room more possibilities

by Ian Lamming

Fact File:

Fiat 500L Trekking

Engine: 1.6 diesel

Power: 105PS

0-62mph: 12

Top speed: 112

Combined miles per
gallon: 60.1

Transmission: six
speed manual

Insurance: 15

CO2 g/km: 122

TIME waits for no one, not even motoring writers.

And as the sand passes through the hourglass, so joints stiffen, tendons tighten. The condition is exacerbated by exercise itself; so after a five mile jaunt through hills and dales cocking a leg to take off a muddy boot brings more than a wince as you stretch for the average boot lip.

Not so Fiat's wonderful 500L Trekking. Pop the rear hatch of this quirkiest of beasts and the rear edge is blissfully low and accommodating. It sums up the car, really, which is delightfully thought out and extremely considerate.

While the boot is low the seating position is nice and high which allows for easy entry and egress. There is also a splendid amount of headroom and the most fabulous glass roof to maximize the amount of energizing daylight that charges the spirit and the soul.

Life is a serious business as you get older and the natural tendency towards abject grumpiness is lightened considerably by the whimsical cabin – it's marvellous.

It's just plain fun, which will make the more mature feel younger and the young feel their age. The image-conscious will love the funky dials and switches and the super-trendy Beat hi-fi; families will love the space and practicality; everyone will enjoy the drive.

The original 500 is a retro gem of epic proportions, the 500L a groovy people carrying version. The trekking takes both and lets them spill off-piste.

Stunningly grippy snow and mud tries and the full gamut of electronic traction control gizmos give this higher than normal L SUV ability. There are stick-on bash plate things aplenty and the overall look is amazingly more purposeful than the idiosyncratic L. I think it's a bit tasty, particularly in yellow and white.

The Yorkshire Dales in this weather are always going to be a challenge – but not in the Trekking. The 1.6 litre diesel handles the inclines and tows the L upwards and onwards with great gusto. The steering and suspension handles the twists and the whole package is stupendously rewarding, hence the smirk on sulky lips.

It's the ideal vehicle for those who live in the country or travel there frequently but it is also completely at home around town, in the car park or on the motorway.

I love the Trekking and it is worth the extra for the rugged good looks, enhanced ability and empathy with ageing bones.