



Fiat Brava

Featuring JTD 105 (Diesel)



What's different? Brava's latest spec moves it closer to Bravo beneath the skin, but latest direct-injection diesel engine is new to both.

PART FROM THE NEW ENGINE, BOTH Brava and (three-door) Bravo have undergone some subtle revisions this year (see R9926A for details), which generally apply across the board.

This five-door has benefited, in fact, by drawing closer to the Bravo in matters of interior detail, as well as steering response, which (as we urged three years ago) now has better weighted power-assistance. The ride still feels hard and fretful over apparently innocuous surfaces, however and doesn't improve with more people aboard, although it does rather better over really serious bumps.

Generally speaking, the interior detailing has been changed for the better; the radio is easier to fathom, the positioning of the knurled, rotating controls for dial lighting and headlamp beams couldn't be better, and the new round dials are much clearer. The foglamps don't switch off with the main lights, however, while the fact that the outside lights *do* extinguish with the ignition, means that one can easily imitate a Volvo next day.

Greater attention to safety and security has brought with it some snags. The rear seatbelt tags stow neatly, but they and the interior door handles are much too stiff to release and the electric windows are sluggish. Rear passengers aren't over-endowed with legroom or support – the old Tipo was a far superior "taxi".

Brakes are ABS-equipped with this diesel and produce a consistently powerful emergency stop, however hard you press beyond 18kg (40lb). At check braking pressures, however, absence of progression in pedal travel (rather than load pressure) complicates things – it feels like a Citroën Xantia. Heat fade can be induced, as well, after harder use.

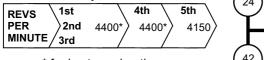
PERFORMANCE

Acceleration time in seconds

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mph	30	4	0	5	0	6	0	70	
THROUGH THE GEARS		1.9		4.6		7.6	•	11.9	
IN 5TH GEAR		7.4		13.3		19.2	,	25.6	
IN 4TH GEAR		4.1		7.8		11.9	,	16.3	

20 mph	30 4	0	5 (0 6	0	70
5TH/4TH SPEED	17.4/9.1			11.8/7.8		
RANGES		1	13.3/7.8			12.3/8.5

Maximum speeds



* for best acceleration

FUEL CONSUMPTION

Fuel grade: ULS diesel	
Type of use - air conditioning off*	mpg
In the city - heavy traffic	29
In the country - quiet driving	59
Typical mpg overall	481/2
Realistic tank range†	53litres/565miles

 $\dot{\tau}$ based on fuel gauge/warning lamp and filling station experience - not nominal tank capacity

*with air conditioning switched on, consumption will increase by 2–4% in winter and 4–8% in summer

FOR THE TECHNICAL

ENGINE

Type transverse four cylinder with iron block and alloy head; five main bearings

Size 82.0 x 90.4mm = 1910cc **Power** 105bhp at 4000rpm **Torque** 148 lb ft at 1500rpm

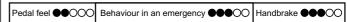
Valves belt-driven single overhead camshaft actuating two valves per cylinder

Fuel/ignition direct-injection diesel with electronically controlled mechanical injection pump and high-pressure "common-rail" delivery; turbocharged with intercooler and exhaust catalyers. 60-litre tank, with low-level warning lamp

TRANSMISSION

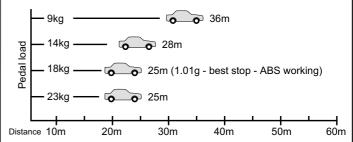
Type five-speed manual, front wheel drive (no auto option) **Mph per 1000rpm** 28.0 in 5th; 20.9 in 4th

BRAKES



Dry road stopping distance from 50mph (with ABS)

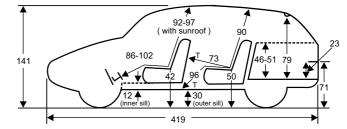
A good-to-average best stop is about 26m at 15-20kg pedal load)



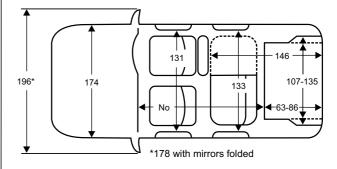
Fade test: pedal load requried for a moderate (34m/.75g) stop: 10kg at start of test, 17kg at end of test (*Ideal brakes show no change*)

MEASUREMENTS

Centimetres Five-door



T: typical back seat space behind medium-sized front occupants





The other safety-related snag is the thick bar that reinforces the rear backrest – it gets in the way unless you're tipping the entire seat forwards.

On the security aspect, we struggled with our test car's alarm and its vagaries of control – locking up with the handset, then opening up by key in the small hours, will make the point nicely!

However, our test car's main point of interest is its brand-new diesel engine. At present, diesel fans are spoilt for choice with three options for the Brava; this direct-injection unit is the future for Fiat and the industry in general, make no mistake. It has a five-cylinder derivative in the Alfa Romeo 156, which startled us with its smoothness and ease; perhaps our expectations of this four-pot version were pitched too high as a result.

Generally, we found it lacked the mechanical refinement we were hoping for; it doesn't suffer the serious vibes below 1500rpm that afflict some

four-cylinder rivals, but it's noisy on cold start-up, becomes vocal again in the mid-range and felt very vibrant and uncouth when performance-testing.

Fuel economy is reasonable without representing the breakthrough that all the under-bonnet wizardry might cause one to expect. The reality is that all this new technology is being employed to meet ever more stringent pollution rules, with better performance and economy as side-benefits.

VERDICT

The latest Brava SX, with its new 105bhp diesel engine, is very keenly priced and offers solid, measurable improvements to its equipment and general deportment. There are inconveniences that remain, however, and the new diesel, though efficient, is put in the shade by the 2.4 Alfa Romeo version, in all respects except fuel economy.



HOW THE BRAVA COMPARES	Engine cap/power (cyl/cc/bhp)		30-70mph through gears (sec)	30-70mph in 5th/4th gears (sec)	Fuel economy (mpg)	Brakes best stop (m/kg)	Maximum legroom - front (cm)	Typical leg/ kneeroom - rear (cm)	Steering turns/ (p) circle (m)	Overall length (cm)
FIAT BRAVA JTD 105	4/1910/105	2500	11.9	25.6/16.3	481/2	25/18*	102	96/73	3.1/10.7	419
Rover 420SDi (Saloon)	4/1994/105	2640	11.3	26.6/16.2	471/2	25/20*	110	99/71	3.2/11.4	449
Vauxhall Astra 2.0Di	4/1994/82	2740	12.8	22.1/15.9	51½	26/21	108	99/75	3.1/10.4	411
Peugeot 406 2.0HDi (Saloon)	4/1997/110	2400	12.0	23.1/15.6	481/2	29/16*	113	98/75	3.1/11.2	460
Honda Civic 1.5i Petrol (Saloon)	4/1493/115	2900	10.5	38.5/22.4	43	24½/18*	111	101/70	3.5/10.6	446
			·			* with ABS			(p) all power	assisted