

Fiat Tempra 2.0ie SX Station Wagon



NOT CONTENT WITH ALREADY OFFERING the Tipo hatchback and mechanically similar (though slightly larger) Tempra saloon, Fiat has added further versatility to its medium car range with a stylish estate car – or Station Wagon, as the company prefers to call it – variant of the Tempra.

Later than some, Fiat has now joined the “clean air brigade” too, with three-way catalytic converters fitted to all new right-hand drive petrol-engined models from summer 1992 onwards. As a result, power output falls from 78 to 71bhp on the 1.4-litre engine (Tipo only) and, more significantly, from 86 to 75bhp on the 1.6-litre.

The 1.8-litre grows to 2 litres, using an 8-valve version of the Tipo’s balancer shaft-equipped 16-valve engine. For the time being, this 2-litre 8-valve engine is available only in the Tempra, but is due in a sporty Tipo 2.0ie GT early in 1993, so adding a second string to the Tipo’s hot-hatchback bow. Producing 115bhp, it offers a few more horses than the superseded 1.8, with

peak torque up, too – 117 lb ft at 3300rpm, compared with 103 lb ft at 2500rpm.

This distinctive Tempra Station Wagon is available in three different versions: the 1.6ie S, the more lavishly equipped 2.0ie SX we sample here, and the impressive turbo-diesel-powered 1.9TD SX.

Willing performance

With its classic twin-cam layout and multi-point fuel injection, the Tempra’s 2-litre engine has the right ingredients to appeal to the keener driver. As we found with the previous 1.8-litre saloon model, this proves to be the case in practice, too.

It rewards with punchy, willing performance and makes all the right noises, although these are now a little more subdued than in sporting Italian cars of old, and the contra-rotating balancer shafts give the engine a slightly whiney, off-beat note.

Thanks to its extensive galvanised panelwork and a comprehensive tally of equipment, however, the

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PERFORMANCE

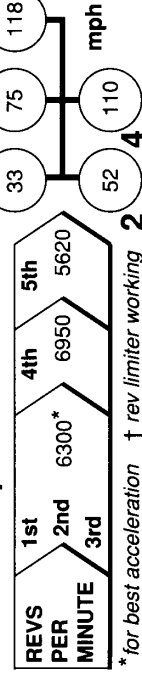
Acceleration time in seconds

STANDING START	0-30mph	0-60mph	1/4 mile
	3.6	11.1	18.2

mph	30	40	50	60	70
THROUGH THE GEARS		2.0	4.4	7.5	11.2
IN 5TH GEAR		6.7	12.9	18.8	25.6
IN 4TH GEAR		4.0	8.0	12.4	17.0

20 mph	30	40	50	60	70
5TH/4TH SPEED RANGES		13.1/8.5	12.1/8.4		12.7/9.0

Maximum speeds



FUEL CONSUMPTION

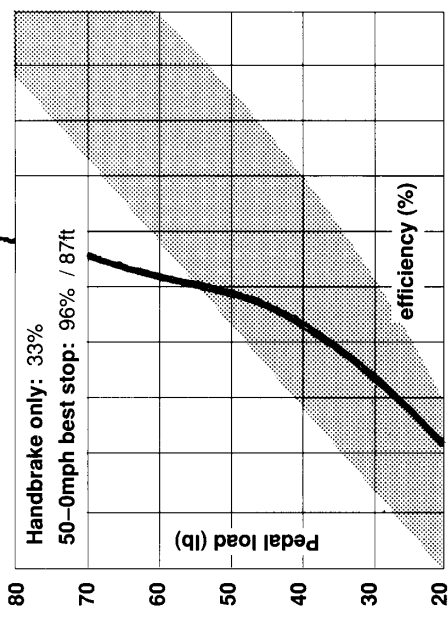
Fuel grade for tests: unleaded Premium, 95 octane

Normal range	mpg
Hard driving, heavy traffic	22
Brisk driving, mixed roads	31
Gentle driving – rural roads	36
Typical mpg overall	31
Realistic tank range*	55 litres/380 miles

*based on gauge/warning lamp and filling station experience

SAFETY

Brakes How pedal loads affect braking



Fade test

How hard use or water affects braking. (Ideal brakes show no change.)

Pedal load needed for 75% stop (lb)

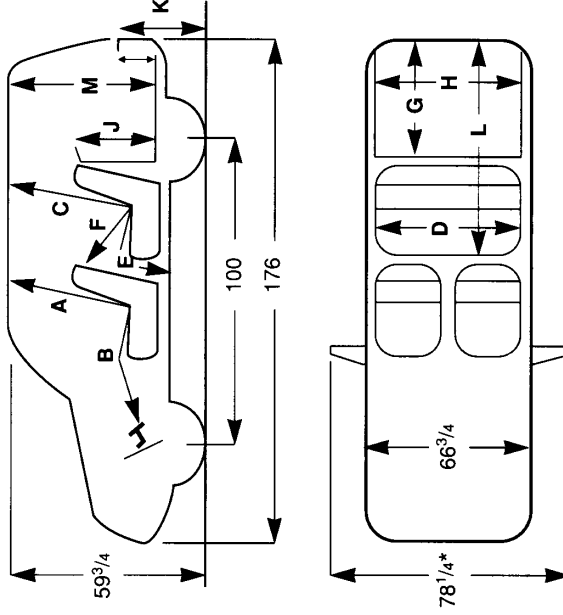
50	At start of test
40	After constant use
50	After severe use
-	After watersplash
-	Number of stops to recover

Safety check list

Steering	true 'feel' of the road?	☒
Brakes	powerful?	☒
	sensible effort?	☒
	fade resistant?	☒
Seatbelts	front – effective?	☒
	convenient?	☒
	rears – effective?	☒
	convenient?	☒
Head restraints	front – effective?	☒
	rear – effective?	☒
Interior	thoroughly padded?	☒
Fuel	shielded filler?	☒
	protected tank?	☒

MEASUREMENTS

Dimensions (inches)



*67 with mirrors folded

Inside (inches)

Kerb weight in lb (full of fuel)

A Front headroom	36 ³ / ₄ -37 ³ / ₄	G Load length	39 ³ / ₄
B Front legroom (min - max)	34-41	H Load floor width (min - max)	39 ¹ / ₂ -44 ¹ / ₄
C Rear headroom	38	J Load height (under security cover)	19
D Back seat width (between armrests)	52	K Sill height (inner/outer)	7/27 ¹ / ₄ 0/20 ³ / ₄ †
E Typical rear * legroom	40 ¹ / ₂	L Load length	62 ¹ / ₄
F Typical rear * kneeroom	30	M Load height (to tailgate hinge)	33

† with lower tailgate dropped

**"Typical" represents the mean measurement behind the driver's seat set at 39in legroom and the passenger's seat set at 41in

Tempra Station Wagon is no lightweight. Comparatively short gearing helps to preserve lively acceleration, but it can lead to the car feeling rather strained on long motorway runs.

At the test tack, the 2-litre Station Wagon delivered performance only marginally slower than that of the old 1.8-litre saloon, with the 2-litre's raised power output largely compensating for the added catalyser and the bulkier body.

These two take their toll of fuel economy, though; we recorded a slightly disappointing 31mpg overall, down from the 33¹/₂mpg we obtained with the 1.8 – which itself wasn't an especially impressive result. Curiously, the fuel tank on 2-litre Tempras holds three litres less, for some reason.

Composed ride

Even with a hefty load up, the Tempra SW retains its composure well, although when lightly laden, its revised suspension feels a shade more turbulent over indifferent surfaces. Compared with the saloon, general road and wind noise seems a little more noticeable, too, but the roomy, comfortable seating is the equal of its booted counterpart, while the raised roofline provides a welcome inch or two of extra headroom all round.

Generously equipped

The 2-litre's SX trim level brings a host of much-appreciated goodies, such as height and lumbar adjustments for the driver's (heated) seat, a front armrest, rear head restraints, electric windows, an automatic heating system, alloy wheels, front fog-lamps, electric mirrors and headlamp pressure washers. These are in addition to the tilt-adjustable steering, central locking, 60/40 split-fold back seats with centre armrest, and an electric tilt and slide sun-roof that are already provided with the S trim level.

Unfortunately, it also means Fiat's high-tech digital instrument display. This isn't one of the finest examples of the breed in our view, and is less easy to live with than the neat, clear analogue instruments provided on lower-series models.

We again experienced a digital gremlin or two: the trip odometer reset itself to zero on one occasion, while the logic of "dumping" the trip mileage whenever the speedo is switched between mph and kph (or vice versa) continues to elude us! This particular bug doesn't happen with the same instruments in the Tipo, apparently.

Stopping power

Also, and not for the first time on a Tempra, we weren't entirely happy with the brakes. We should say immediately that, an annoying squeal apart, pedal feel and braking performance were entirely acceptable in normal road use.

Under more arduous use at the test track, however, the pedal required a worryingly heavy shove to produce even the modest ultimate deceleration we

recorded, unless the brakes were thoroughly warmed to their task. This is illustrated by the hefty 100 lb pedal load required to bring the test car's optional anti-lock system into play.

It's the exact opposite of brake fade, if you like; braking performance is much more responsive once they're given a grilling. This left us wondering whether the friction materials hadn't been selected with rather too much Latin driving temperament in mind!

The business end

Without compromising the saloon's back seat space or comfort, and with a little more headroom as well, there's a spacious, well-presented load area at the back, free of virtually any wheelarch intrusion. Access is gained through a novel Range Rover-style split tailgate.

In normal use only the main upper section is used, just as with a conventional estate car's tailgate. For getting heavy or awkward loads on board (or for the odd, extra-long load that won't quite fit in), the lower section, incorporated in the rear bumper, can be dropped. This takes about 7in out of the loading height or, alternatively, provides a full-width "ski-flap" below the main tailgate, although running with it open like this risks sucking exhaust fumes into the cabin.

Cover up

While Tempra SX saloons come with rear sunblinds, the Station Wagon substitutes a security cover to obscure the load area's contents from prying eyes. Unlike the more usual spring-loaded roller blind, the cover consists of a roll of padded vinyl material reinforced with lateral bars. It has Velcro down each side to keep it in place, or you simply roll it up carpet-fashion (or even remove it altogether) to gain access to the load space. Cheap-and-cheerful, some might say, but we found it a rather practical alternative to providing visual security while still retaining reasonably easy access to the load space.

If there's not enough space inside, 2-litre SX and Turbo-diesel Station Wagons also come with roof bars, with optional clip-on cross rails to turn it into a roof rack proper.

Quibbles

It's a pity that the estate car treatment means the use of a slimline "space-saver" spare wheel, although in this case it genuinely lives up to its name, stowing neatly, upright at the left-hand side of the load area. The normal spare wheel well under the substantial, ribbed load-deck is given over to a neat circular oddments bin that enables valuables to be kept out of sight.

In addition to a pair of delayed-action cabin dome lamps, worked by any of the passenger doors, there's also a roof-mounted lamp to illuminate the load area at night. Rather inconveniently, though, this seems to entail manual switching, as despite extensive study of the handbooks, we were unable to get it to operate as a courtesy lamp in conjunction with the tailgate.

Apart from the couple of quirks with its digital instruments, the Station Wagon was comparatively well behaved during its time with us (unlike some previous Fiat models we've tested), although it did rather blot its copybook on the last day or so, developing an irritating misfire until thoroughly warmed up after cold starts.

VERDICT

Fiat's Tipo and Tempra stable provides a well-considered variety of models in the all-important medium-sized sector, with the combined 16-model range offering something to suit nearly all tastes.

Keen pricing throughout the range is complemented by excellent space utilisation and generous

equipment levels, particularly on top-level SX versions, and all petrol-engined models are now available with catalytic converters.

The Station Wagon makes a good fist of it, providing a reasonably spacious, practical load area, along with some driver appeal, while still offering roomy and comfortable accommodation for passengers. Fuel economy and refinement don't feature very highly among its strengths, however.

It's a distinctive looker, too, and features that novel split tailgate to make life a little easier getting the gardening and DIY requisites on board. But we do wish that Fiat would offer conventional analogue instruments as a no-cost option in place of the digital *Star Wars* set-up.

HOW IT COMPARES	Engine cap/power (cc/bhp)	Max speed (mph)	30-70mph through gears (sec)	30-70mph in 5th/4th gears (sec)	Fuel economy (mpg)	Brakes best stop (%g/lb)	Maximum legroom – front (in)	Typical leg/kneeroom – rear (in)	Steering turns/circle (ft)	Overall length (in)
All five-door estates										
Fiat Tempra 2.0ie SX SW Cat	1995/115	118	11.2	25.6/17.0	31	75/70*	41	40 ¹ / ₂ /30	3.1/34 ³ / ₄ (p)	176
Citroën BX 16TXS Estate*	1580/94	105	11.5	27.0/18.0	37 ¹ / ₂	83/35	41 ³ / ₄	41 ¹ / ₂ /30 ¹ / ₂	3.0/35 (p)	173 ¹ / ₄
Peugeot 405 1.9GTxi Estate*	1905/125	119	10.1	25.0/16.9	34 ¹ / ₂	92/60	43	40/30 ¹ / ₄	3.1/34 ¹ / ₂ (p)	173 ¹ / ₄
Renault 21 Savanna 2.0GTX	1995/120	120	9.9	24.4/18.0	31 ¹ / ₂	102/45*	42 ¹ / ₂	39 ¹ / ₂ /30	3.3/35 ³ / ₄ (p)	184 ³ / ₄
VW Passat 2.0GL Estate Cat*	1984/115	121	10.7	24.3/17.7	35	95/37	43	42 ¹ / ₂ /32	3.3/33 (p)	180
* performance and economy figures for saloon version						* with ABS		(p) power assisted		

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

ENGINE

Type and size front-mounted, transverse 4 in line; water-cooled. 84.0mm bore x 90.0mm stroke = 1995cc. Iron block and aluminium alloy head; 5 main bearings

Compression ratio 9.5:1

Valve gear twin belt-driven overhead camshafts, actuating two valves per cylinder via shim-adjusted tappets

Fuel system IAW Weber Marelli electronic multi-point fuel injection, three-way regulated catalyser with lambda sensor and exhaust gas recirculation. 62-litre (13.6-gallon) tank, with low-level warning lamp. Fuel required: unleaded only, 95 octane

Ignition system fully programmed electronic, integral with fuel injection, via coil and distributor

Maximum power 115bhp at 5750rpm

Maximum torque 117 lb ft at 3300rpm

TRANSMISSION

Clutch dry plate, diaphragm-spring; hydraulically operated. Pedal load/travel: 26 lb/6in

Gearbox 5-speed (all synchromesh) and reverse.

Ratios: first 3.55, second 2.27, third 1.54, fourth 1.16, top 0.87 and reverse 3.91:1

Final drive 3.56:1, to front wheels

Mph per 1000rpm 21.0 in top; 15.9 in 4th

Rpm at 70mph 3335 in top gear

CHASSIS

Suspension front: independent by MacPherson damper/struts, coil springs, lower wishbones and an anti-roll bar. Rear: independent by trailing arms and coil springs. Dampers: telescopic all round

Steering power-assisted rack and pinion, with 3.1 turns between full locks. Turning circles average 34³/₄ft between kerbs, with 52¹/₄ft circle for one turn of the wheel

Wheels 5¹/₂J x 14 alloy (standard) with 185/60R14 82H tyres (Goodyear NCT2 on test car). Spare: Michelin TEX emergency spare T105/70R14 84M on steel rim

Brakes 9.5in ventilated discs front, solid discs rear, with vacuum servo. Optional Bosch three-channel anti-lock system on test car