

Well-rounded and lookin' sharp by Joe Sage

We drove the highly anticipated Fiat 500X—cousin to the also completely new Jeep Renegade—at its launch event in California, after having been enticed by its clever “little blue pill” Super Bowl advertising—and found it to indeed be a potent little package.

The 500X shares basic platform, engines, 9-speed automatic and fuel-saving rear axle disconnect with the Renegade. The Fiat is available with AWD (ours was a front-driver) but is not intended for off-road duty. Which is fine for its purpose.

This under-3000-pound subcompact utility has nice ergonomics and a solid feel. As with the Renegade, you anticipate that it will be small, but sitting inside, you find a spaciouly comfortable cabin that looks and feels no smaller than many a one-segment-larger compact crossover.

There are five trim levels for the 500X, ranging from \$20,000 to \$27,100; this “Easy” model is the second one up, which makes it the most affordable one with the 180-hp 2.4L Tigershark engine, with AWD available, and with FCA’s much-better-

than-most Uconnect® infotainment system (with a base five-inch touchscreen, upgradeable). Easy also gives you 12 paint options, compared with the base Pop’s five. It’s a great place to start. (And after those Super Bowl ads, the Easy jokes just kind of write themselves.)

You can add AWD for \$1900, which we would do, just to have, though we noticed no front-drive downsides around town. You can add or upgrade many other details, but the model walk is so well conceived, it’s just as easy to move up the lineup.

The 9-speed is smooth and efficient—we would see our indicator in 7th gear very quickly. Its 180 hp will not win high performance faceoffs, but an effective manumatic shifter mitigates this, as does the vehicle’s Sport setting.

The Fiat 500X is a strong contender. In fact, it’s a finalist for North American Truck of the Year (as the definition of truck has been broadened considerably). A winner is crowned in January. ■



SPECIFICATIONS

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|----------------------|---------------------------------|
| ENGINE | 2.4L 4-cyl MultiAir2 Tigershark |
| HP/TORQUE | 180 hp / 175 lb-ft |
| TRANSMISSION | 9-speed automatic |
| DRIVETRAIN | FWD |
| CARGO CAPACITY | 18.5 / 50.8 cu ft |
| TURNING CIRCLE | 36.3 ft |
| TOW CAPACITY | not recommended |
| WEIGHT | 2967 lb |
| MPG | 22/31/25 (city/hwy/comb) |

BASE PRICE **\$22,300**

EASY COLLECTION 2: 1500

CONVENIENCE GROUP: Dual-zone climate, heated seats, 8-way power driver’s seat, heated wheel, wiper/deicer, ambient lighting, cargo cover.

SAFETY GROUP: Backup camera, rear park assist, blind spot monitor, rear cross path detection.

DESTINATION CHARGE: 900

TOTAL **\$24,700**

