

# USED CARS

HOW TO BUY A  
FIAT PANDA



## LIGHTEN UP A LITTLE, WILL YOU?

Enjoy the carefree charm of the third-generation Panda from just £2000

**I**f you want a quirky baby hatchback with genuine off-road ability, there's only one car for the job: the Fiat Panda 4x4. The third generation of the ever-so-cute Italian, launched in 2011, added a cheeky and cuddly look, improved interior technology and greater refinement to its famous versatility.

"The Panda is one of those cars that is exceptionally hard to be harsh to, one that revels in being what it is: a wonderfully compact, fun car," was our summary when we road tested it at the time.

Its ease of use and classless appeal helped earn the Panda an impressive 4.5-star verdict, trouncing rivals in a segment that was then full of overachievers – the Volkswagen Up chief among them.

Fast forward to 2025 and the Panda is accessible to all, with well-used, high-mileage examples available for less than £2000.

If your budget is tight, you will end up with a Panda powered by either a 68bhp 1.2-litre four-cylinder or 84bhp turbocharged 0.9-litre two-cylinder petrol engine.

The 1.2 is fine if you intend to use the Panda for city hops, but it feels a bit sluggish on a rural road or motorway. It's smooth and a little more refined than the thrummy-sounding Twinair, but then that can be comfortably driven around town and up the motorway.

A tidy Twinair with around 50k to 60k miles on the clock should set you back around £3500, but it's well worth spending the extra cash – and some versions of the Twinair won't cost you a penny in road tax.

There's also a 1.3-litre four-cylinder diesel, the Multijet, which has more than enough grunt and will easily manage around 50mpg.

If you're after more fun from your city car, plus all-terrain usability, the Panda 4x4 is the one to go for,



Later models gained a touchscreen but the basic design went unchanged



## What we said then

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"The Panda 4x4's mix of city car and SUV traits remains as unique as ever. This version adds expertly judged style to the list, making a truly distinctive car all the more appealing. However, the city car and the SUV don't meet exactly in the middle of the void between them where the Panda 4x4 sits; this is much more a steroidal supermini than a shrunken mud-plugger. It's a bit of fun, not a proper utility machine."

driven (power is diverted to the rear in the event of slip), it's as fun to drive as a standard Panda, albeit with a bit more roll.

For proper green-laning, you will want the Panda Cross. It's a proper trooper, with more prominent skidplates, a dedicated off-road driving mode that locks the differential for permanent four-wheel drive and hill descent control. A tidy, 60k-mile example will be around £2000 dearer than a standard 4x4 in similar condition.

Inside, the Panda shows its cheaper side with plenty of hard-wearing, scratchy plastics, but it's nevertheless pleasant to ride around in, with an airy ambience.

If you're after some modern touches, we would point you towards the facelifted Panda, which arrived in 2020 and could be had with a 7.0in infotainment touchscreen that benefits from smartphone mirroring.

That facelift also introduced a 1.0-litre three-cylinder mild hybrid. It's easy to operate around town and the electrical system gives a bit of extra poke. Mind you, the three-pot is pretty staid and you have to work hard to get it up to speed – plus it will fall 10 short of the official 46mpg.

The 4x4 versions are even more charming inside, with colourful dashboard trim pieces and funky patterns on the seats.

Space inside is best described as adequate, as the rear bench can only seat two passengers. The boot is large enough for your weekly food shop but little more.

Space limitations and material quality are easily overlooked in a car like the Panda, though. No other city car pulls at your heartstrings in the same way or offers as much fun, whether you're bumbling around town or tackling the rough stuff.

**SAM PHILLIPS**

with its increased ride height, bright skidplates and chunky styling.

The 4x4 rides acceptably, thanks to its small alloys and soft springs, and because it's primarily front-



It's no Defender, but you wouldn't even try this in any other city car

**"It's exceptionally hard to be harsh to. It revels in being what it is: a wonderfully compact, fun car"**

## How to get one in your garage

### AN OWNER'S VIEW

**BEN MCCAULDER**

"I learned to drive in an original Panda, so I'm fond of them. My justification for my 4x4 Twinair was living in the sticks and my other cars being low-slung. It's a great palate-cleanser. It's a joy and more engaging than it has any right to be. While it's cheap and cheerful, goodies like Bluetooth and heated seats make for a nice place to be.

"The official MPG is optimistic but local roads aren't conducive to hypermiling. Servicing is cheap but I have had bills. These were all reasonable given the age and mileage – brakes, springs – and some were preventative. The only unusual one was a failed propshaft bearing. The official part is pricey but aftermarket ones are available."

### BUYER BEWARE...

#### ■ DRIVETRAIN

The rear differential on 4x4 Pandas can weep oil, typically caused by a worn or damaged seal. Severe leaks might require a new diff, but if the leak is only minor, a new seal can solve it. A diff can cost around £300 to £900 on eBay.

Oil can also leak from the propshaft where it meets the front transfer case. The seal is often the culprit and costs £20 to £40 for a new one – a complex job, though, so best done by a professional.

#### ■ BRAKES

Listen for any squealing noises from the rear brakes. Cleaning them and adding grease can help matters. For the worst cases, Fiat offers vibration dampers to stop the issue entirely.

#### ■ INTERIOR

The rear seats can rattle but greasing the latches can sort this out. Trim pieces and the dashboard can also rattle, but that's something you will have to live with.

#### ■ BODY

The 4x4s might have tackled the odd rough track, so check the skidplates, plastic bumpers and underside for any damage.

Boot mechanism and latch is known for being faulty, so check it shuts properly, else you will have to fork out for a new assembly.

#### ■ WHEELS

There's plenty of tyre sidewall to protect them, but have a glance at the alloys to make sure they're free of scuffs.



### ALSO WORTH KNOWING

The Panda achieved a four-star safety rating from Euro NCAP back in 2012, scoring highly (82%) for adult occupant protection.

While some versions of the Panda cost nothing to tax, you can always save money with a Multijet diesel, which in most cases costs only £20 to tax. Cross and 4x4 examples can be as much as £190 to tax annually.

Pop, Easy and Lounge were the main trim levels on the standard car. There was also the Trekking, which looked like the 4x4 but was in fact front-wheel drive. Special editions include the City Life, City Cross, Garmin, Waze and Wild.

### HOW MUCH TO SPEND

**£1500–£3999**

Well-used Pop, Easy and Lounge cars. Twinair and 1.2-litre petrol engines dominate.

**£4000–£7999**

A wider mix of engines and trims with more diesels. Plenty of tidy 4x4s with reasonable miles on the clock. It's easy to find a car with a full history or one former owner.

**£8000–£11,999**

Very clean, cared-for examples. Lots of 4x4, Cross and Twinair cars and plenty of later mild hybrids.

**£12,000 AND ABOVE**

Newer, immaculate examples with low miles. Twinair and mild-hybrid engines. Dealer only.



### ONE WE FOUND

**FIAT PANDA 0.9 TWINAIR 4x4, 2014, 73,000 MILES, £5999**

You can't go wrong with this tidy little scamp. It has the punchier petrol engine, the benefit of four-wheel drive and just one previous keeper. There's plenty of service history with it, too, and it's funkier than usual inside, thanks to its khaki and cream cloth seats.