

Fiat X1/9

Keith Adams celebrates the early Seventies vision of the future of the affordable sports car – the light, agile and economical Fiat X1/9

It never revolutionised the sports car market in the way we thought it would, and it probably lived far too long, but the Fiat X1/9 looks more relevant today than many of its peers. Few are as much fun to drive and so easy on the wallet... if you get a good one.

When it appeared in 1972, the Fiat X1/9 shook the world – the mid-engined, two-seater, targa-topped car represented a taste of exoticism for working class money. Featuring show-car styling, as penned by Bertone's Marcello Gandini, and the cutting edge engine/transmission/suspension package from the Fiat 128, it cemented Italy's position as the best manufacturer of sports cars for sensible money.

Pre-dating the trend for wedge-shaped cars by a few years, the radical X1/9 (named after its project code) set a concept that few, aside

from Harris Mann and the Triumph TR7, dared to follow. Looks aside, we love the X1/9 because it is a cracking drive with steering to die for, it will do more than 30mpg, and there are two boots to dump your shopping in. Getting the roof off is also a 30-second cinch.

Working on it might not be the easiest job in the world, and even the nicest examples will need constant fettling, but it's definitely worth the effort for the first time the sun comes out and you can go out and have some semi-topless fun. There are few of the original 1300cc models left, and the later 1500 ended up with US-spec bumpers, which spoiled the style somewhat – but that's no bad thing if you spend lots of time in the city.

It sounds like the perfect 21st century sports car to us... shame Fiat was 30 years too early launching it.



TECH SPEC 1972 FIAT X1/9 1300

- **ENGINE:** 1290cc, OHC, 4-cylinder, mid-mounted
- **POWER:** 75bhp@6600rpm
- **TORQUE:** 72lb ft@3400rpm
- **TOP SPEED:** 105mph
- **0-60MPH:** 11.8sec
- **GEARBOX:** 4-speed manual
- **LENGTH:** 150.8in (3830mm)
- **WIDTH:** 61.8in (1570mm)
- **WEIGHT:** 1940lb (880kg)
- **VALUE NOW:** £500-£2500

Guest editor Peter Bays says...

I SAW MY first X1/9 as a 14-year-old and knew I had to have one. Sadly, it would be another six years before I could actually buy one. My friends might have loved the 1500VS, but my family saw it for what it was – a real money-pit.

During my three years of ownership it needed new discs and pads all-round, two new exhausts, a replacement cylinder head gasket, reconditioned gearbox and a new driveshaft, not to mention welding and re-spray I treated it to.

Eventually, hard economics necessitated the sale of my beloved X1/9 to scrape together a deposit for my first house.

The little Fiat had been left sulking in a communal car park, having succumbed to the re-occurring alternator/wiring problem that had dogged it all those years. But when it went, I still shed a tear. All the money I had invested and the heartache it caused was worth it for the few times it ran properly. That go-kart handling, wind-in-the-hair feeling and rev-happy engine was sheer bliss.

Buy wisely and enjoy one yourself!

Even the nicest examples of the X1/9 will need constant fettling, but it's **definitely** worth it for when the sun comes out for the first time



Mid-engine layout provides great balance, but it's not the easiest to work on.

