

CLASSIC DRIVER

Fiat Panda 4x4

Lead

An 'alternative' fashion statement in St. Moritz: and proof that you don't need the latest Aston Martin or Bentley to survive winter in the Engadine.

Small is beautiful



Even some of the most stylish individuals prefer to travel from the chalet to the Cresta Run in a classic Fiat Panda 4x4 – proving less is often more.

Winter in St. Moritz and sportsmen flock to the Cresta Run, but only once the road has been cleared of ice. Steep mountain roads plagued with ice and snow are hardly ideal for powerful Bentleys and Astons, where hundreds of horsepower are rendered useless and the luxury cars survive only thanks to electronic safety systems. Here, less is more, especially in the case of a simple but highly efficient driving device such as the Fiat Panda 4x4.

Airbags, air-conditioning, surround-sound entertainment? Nope. ESP and electronic limited-slip differential? Not a chance. These were unknown when the little car came out of its box for the first time in 1983, but it has what really matters in St. Moritz: four wheels, all driven, and a steering wheel that in standard form is upholstered in rubber-like plastic, but could (for a price) be specified with your leather of choice – or even replaced by a Nardi wheel. And of course, an engine, ideally the 'Fire' engine, that 1.1-litre which also powered the Fiat Uno and Lancia Y. Fuel-efficient and extremely durable, the Panda 4x4 so-equipped could even tackle the Paris-Dakar Rally.

Unpretentious, cuddly little Panda



You'd rarely drive the 4x4 Panda long distances. The unpretentious little Fiat is happiest when shuttling you between town and country cottage. On this kind of short-range journey, you hardly notice that the two thinly padded front garden chairs have neither heating nor a seat massage function. These unnecessary accessories are simply replaced by thick winter clothes. However, the square, practical shape of the little Fiat does mean that passengers enjoy a surprising amount of room; two people can sit in the rear in reasonable comfort.

The small, nimble Fiat is also a pragmatic choice for the car park, as is the retrofit start-stop button. A light pressure on the button and the four-cylinder begins its work: there's little risk of theft in St. Moritz in any case, because everyone knows everyone else. And even the most determined thief would be unlikely to whisk the Fiat Panda over the lengthy, snow-covered serpentine passes – all-wheel drive or not.

The Facts

Body:

Two-door all-steel body with optional folding roof and a large tailgate

Engine:

4-cylinder 1.0-litre petrol engine with 48HP or, from 1991, 1.1-litre, 50HP

Transmission:

Front-wheel drive with selectable four-wheel drive; no centre differential

Ground clearance:

Sufficient for medium-scale mountain expeditions

Production period:

1983 - 2003

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