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AUTO MOTION



Car news, reviews and features by **Matt Degen**

First Fiat dealership opens in Orange County

March 15th, 2011, 12:10 pm · [3 Comments](#) · posted by **Matt Degen**

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After more than two decades out of the U.S. market, Italian automaker Fiat is again selling cars in America, and the first Orange County dealership is now open for business.

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[Orange Coast Fiat](#), at 2524 Harbor Blvd. in Costa Mesa, opened its doors Tuesday to sell some of the first Fiat 500 cars in the U.S. The Fiat 500 is a tiny four-passenger car that, at less than 140 inches in length, is even smaller than a Mini Cooper. Pricing starts at \$15,500, before tax, title and destination fees.

The front-wheel-drive car is powered by a 1.4-liter four-cylinder engine that makes 101 horsepower and 98 lb.-ft. of torque. With a six-speed automatic transmission, the car gets fuel-economy ratings of 27 mpg city/34 highway and up to 38 mpg highway when equipped with a five-speed manual transmission.

PHOTOS: [FIAT 500 DEBUTS AT L.A. AUTO SHOW](#)

The cars are available in three versions, Pop, Sport, and at the highest end around \$20,000, Lounge, which offers features like a Bose premium sound system, glass roof and Bluetooth technology for hands-free phone calls.

Fiat is selling the cars through Chrysler's network of dealers and plans to open around 150 stores in all this year, including another locally in Irvine. Fiat took control of Chrysler after the American automaker filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy in 2009.

ALSO SEE: [FIAT 500 MPG RATING REVEALED](#)

Jon Gray, CEO of Talon Automotive Group, which runs the Costa Mesa store, expects the small cars to be a hit, especially with rising gasoline prices.

"It is an exciting time for Fiat as it enters the U.S. with one of the hottest cars on the market today – the Fiat 500," he said. "The opportunity for us to open Orange County's first Fiat dealership is in itself an honor and validates our ongoing commitment to all of our Dodge, Jeep, Chrysler and now Fiat customers. With its high MPG around 40 and affordable price, the Fiat 500 will be a huge hit among Orange County car buyers."

YOUR TURN: *What do you think of the new Fiat 500? Would you buy one?*

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