



Van Review | **Fiat Doblo Cargo XL**

GO LARGE!

The improved Fiat Doblo Cargo XL van offers small van operators the one thing they crave more than anything: sheer utility. Jonathan Crouch reports

Ten Second Review

The improved Fiat Doblo XL van's combination of a long wheelbase and a high roof makes it a tempting choice in the compact van market, this vehicle offering a load volume of 5.0 cubic metres and a payload of 1,000kg. With three frugal turbodiesel engines to choose from, Fiat could be onto a winner with this one.



Background

Fiat's Doblo compact van has come an awful long way from the rather awkward-looking thing launched here around the turn of the century. Today, it's a confident commercial design that offers one of the most spacious choices in the segment, especially in the improved form we're going to look at here.

There's been a shift in recent years to more capable small vans that can do more than deliver flowers and pizzas, vehicles with heavy duty potential and this Doblo XL reflects that, offering operators the utility they need at a price they'll like. With some great diesel engines on offer, the Doblo in this form looks to have really come of age in the commercial sector.

Driving Experience

Predictably from a manufacturer that pioneered the common-rail diesel technology that now dominates the engine bays of our top commercial vehicles, Fiat has given the Doblo a strong range of engines. There are Multijet common-rail diesels in 1.3, 1.6 and 2.0-litre guises. The 1.3-litre Multijet II oil-burner has 95bhp and the 1.6 Multijet II unit ups the torque output to 105bhp - or 90bhp if you choose the 'Comfort-Matic' automatic version. Finally, the 2.0-litre Multijet flagship has 135bhp with a meaty 320Nm of torque, which is a serious amount of muscle for a compact van.

With this revised model, the cornerstone 1.3-litre and 1.6-litre turbo-diesel engines benefit from enhanced responsiveness - more torque from lower revs - and improved efficiency of up to 12 percent. In the case of the 1.3-litre MultiJet II engine, for example, this responsiveness has increased by approximately 40 percent compared to the model it replaces, resulting in greater flexibility for more relaxed and efficient driving as well as livelier performance when circumstances demand.

Most compact vans have a heavy duty torsen beam but the Doblo goes for a transverse linkage hinged from a central anchor point. It means operators can expect a little extra finesse from this Fiat over the bumps.

Design and Build

This improved Doblo Cargo model also benefits from a complete redesign in line with the more muscular design language first seen on Fiat's improved large Ducato van. The sculpted bonnet and distinctive restyled headlamps combine with the bolder grille, a revised front bumper, lower air intakes and restyled fog light shrouds, while at the rear, sleeker light clusters

round out the Dobl??'s aesthetic revisions.

This XL model's high roof integrates fairly elegantly into the body, providing an aerodynamic and cohesive-looking vehicle. The rear doors provide full access to the load compartment, allowing customers to fully utilise the big 5m² load volume. This XL version sits somewhere between the Berlingo/Combo/Transit Connect-sized compact vans and much bigger Transit/Vivaro/Transporter-shaped medium sized models. Fiat hope to snare a number of customers from the bottom end of the latter group, business buyers who, the brand hopes, will be attracted by this Dobl XL's impressive load capacity and one tonne payload.

Market and Model

For a compact van, the Dobl Cargo has a wide model range. There are four bodystyles, two wheelbases and two roof heights giving rise to load volumes ranging from 3.4 to 4.2 square meters. Some will want to look at the Combi versions with their second row of seats. Or the platform cab variant that can be fitted with all manner of aftermarket modifications. Here, we're looking at the high roof XL version with a one tonne payload and a load capacity of five cubic metres. Prices of this derivative start at around £16,500.

The range offers five engines, ranging from 90 to 135hp, and four trim levels are available: Standard, EcoJet, SX and Tecnico. Standard features on all Dobl?? models include adjustable-level headlamps, a full-size spare wheel, full bulkhead, overhead storage, electric windows, central locking, full wheel trims, side rubbing strips, full-height twin panelled rear doors, offside sliding side door, (plus a nearside sliding side door on Maxi and XL models) and a speed limiter (upon request). The EcoJet version adds smart alternator management, variable displacement oil pump, Start & Stop, low-friction oil, and low-rolling resistance tyres and a new aerodynamic pack.

Fresh options include a clever Gateway module for vehicle telematics, a power folding door mirror function, DAB preparation for aftermarket audio systems and the Traction+ system which has already proved itself in the Fiorino and Ducato models. Traction+ enables drivers to make sure-footed progress even on low-grip surfaces, such as snow or mud, without increasing the weight of the vehicle, thereby avoiding the increased running costs associated with full 4x4 systems

Practicalities & Costs

The Dobl XL offers impressive storage in and around the cabin, with a big load area out back. There aren't too many vans at this price that can offer a genuine five cubic metre capacity and a one tonne payload. What's more, this Fiat makes that easy to access with wide-opening doors and a nicely shaped load floor.

Up front, there's a large shelf above the windscreen and a lockable glovebox with space for a smallish laptop computer. The door pockets will each take a couple of small drinks bottles and a document clip can be assigned to the dashboard from the options list.

As for running costs, well the big news with this revised model comes with the news that the 90hp 1.3 MultiJet II and 105hp 1.6 MultiJet II engines are now available in frugal "EcoJet" guises. These variants offer a reduction in fuel consumption and emissions levels thanks to the use of Start&Stop engine technology, low rolling-resistance tyres, low-viscosity oil, an 'intelligent' alternator, a variable-displacement oil pump and an aerodynamic pack. All this makes it possible to achieve a fuel economy figure of up to 64mpg on the combined cycle and CO₂ emissions of just 115g/km.

Summary

The improved Fiat Dobl Cargo XL is an interesting proposition, offering a huge carrying capacity in a comparatively compact vehicle. This, along with value pricing and a strong reliability record ought to be a recipe for fleet success. You could certainly recommend a business buyer looking at a bottom-end Ford Transit Custom or Vauxhall Vivaro to seriously consider one of these as an equally versatile but more cost-effective option.

With a strong range of engines, the choice of manual or automatic gearboxes, a Combi or panel van body and Fiat dealer offers to consider, this is one of those vans that doesn't seem to put a foot wrong. Can you see the catch? No, me neither.



Scoring

Spacious Compact Vans

Performance	70%
Handling	70%
Comfort	80%
Space	100%
Styling	70%
Build	70%
Value	80%
Equipment	80%
Economy	80%
Depreciation	50%
Insurance	70%
Total	75%