

1962 Fiat 1500S OSCA

A True Italian!



The Fiat 1500S OSCA is a rare gem indeed. It is based on the lines of the Fiat 1100 Transformobile. They are built on the same chassis and retain nearly all of the second series Fiat 1200 body lines. Both the 1200 and the 1500 OSCA were introduced in 1959 following the highly collectible Fiat 1100 Transformobile. The Fiat 1500S isn't hard to spot if you know what you're looking for, but few actually get this opportunity with such a rare automobile.



1962 Fiat 1500S

These elegantly styled cabriolets' brought about both the end and the beginning of an era. They were a departure from the bulbous 1950's look and an introduction to a new era of sports cars, best represented by the Fiat 124 Spider, which was produced until 1985 ½ and culminated with the Azura and Volumex cars. These cars retained very similar features 25 years later. The body lines of this

car have been copied by many manufacturers over the years. They are elegant, beautiful and graceful in their appearance.



1962 Fiat 1500 OSCA Engine

As a 1960's car, of course they are very mechanical, the OSCA version not so much as the 1200. The Maserati engine, heavier suspension, deluxe interior and sports car instrumentation were far more refined than the 1200. The OSCA was much more of a pure Italian convertible than most Italian cars of it's day, barring Ferrari and other exotics. It was the next best thing. The Fiat OSCA, as well as many other exotic Italian cars of the era were hand assembled Pininfarina's.

As with Ferrari, the 1500 OSCA had numbered pieces, such as door handles, bumper over riders and various other trim pieces. The parts were pre numbered to go with each car before assembly. What happens after that, only the assembler knows. Typically, the tags welded to the underside of the hood and deck lid will match the last three of the build number stamped on the left rear of the trunk floor. The first two numbers indicate the model designation. 38 or 39 for OSCA, 58 or 59 for 1200. No exceptions



VIN Tag and stamping 1500S



1960 Fiat 1500 (Note the fuse box and location))

The engine serial number is stamped on the VIN tag located at the right rear of the engine compartment along with the paint code from '59 to '61. Many of the '62 tags completely omit the engine number. It is also not at all uncommon to find a mismatched engine number, or even a 1600 118SA engine in a 1500S depending on when it was produced. There are well documented cars with the original engine and the wrong number. The VIN will always begin with 118S for OSCA. The OSCA engines are numbered 118, 118SA, 118SB.

The number sequence on the VIN tag appears to be somewhat irrelevant. An unrestored '59 1500 OSCA (not an S) with engine number 0335 was found to be first registered as a '62 upon State Patrol inspection. It could be the import date or the date it left the factory. Another 1962 1500S model with no engine

number on the tag was also found with a 118SA 1600 engine in it. Neither Pininfarina or Fiat kept good track of the numbers, if at all. The featured



1962 Fiat 1500S

OSCA is an excellent numbers matching example.

The Fiat 1500 OSCA was fitted with 15" 5 lug wheels with, wood trimmed dash, Nardi steering wheel, tachometer, polished grille, passenger foot bar, center grab handle or console and most notably wider chrome hood trim.

The OSCA engine was a 1497cc twin cam engine was designed by Maserati and produced by Fiat, while the 4 speed transmission and rear differential were essentially unchanged from the 1200 (with the exception of the bell housing and clutch) throughout the range until the 5 speed was introduced in 1964. They received upgraded dual cylinder hydraulic drum brakes for 1959-61. Both disc and drum brake models were fitted with an inline proportioning valve unique to this model along with a hydraulic clutch. Both required a good degree of technical skill to adjust and still do. The drum brakes in the front were somewhat complicated having 4 adjustors at each wheel. Proper service required machining the arc of the shoes to the drums and measuring clearance around the diameter of the drum through holes cast around the circumference. The drums are often stamped with the location on the car, such as LF etc.

The 1500 OSCA also had a much stiffer suspension than other cabriolets. They had additional leaf springs in the rear as well as heavier coil springs and larger diameter sway bar in the front. Extra bump stops were installed at the front of the rear leaf spring to keep it stable on the road. There is a metal pad welded to the body for mounting. It was a much sportier ride to accompany the additional horsepower.

In late 1961, some of the OSCA's were equipped with 4-wheel disc brakes. These cars are very rare and few were produced. In fact, a true 1961 OSCA with 4-wheel disc retains many of the same trim features as the drum brake cars such as wider headlight rings and canister style lighting switch. This particular car is what would be considered an early '62 model rather than a late '61.

In 1962, the OSCA was upgraded to 4-wheel disc as standard. There are however many examples that have only front disc for 1961 and 1962 both. There is no distinction between them visually aside from the plastic brake fluid reservoir for '62. '61 front disc car reservoirs would be metal. These were likely left over rear drum set ups from earlier years and intended to be 4 disc cars.

The defining features of the very rare 1961 4-wheel disc car is the use of two separate license lights, wider headlight ring and the two metal brake fluid reservoirs as earlier cars would have. Aside from having two reservoirs, the location of them also helped to identify the year. Drum cars had both mounted near the carburetor while 4 disc cars had one on each side of the engine compartment. The 1962 models had a plastic reservoir for the brake fluid making them easily distinguishable upon opening the hood. The plastic reservoir on a disc brake car is far more common and reveals the '62 model quite clearly.



1960 Drum Car



1961 2 or 4-Wheel Disc



4-Wheel Disc Car



1600S Power 4 Disc

Another distinction in 1962 was the use of twin tubular mufflers on a flow through twin exhaust. This can be seen on both 1961 and '62 4 disc models only. This actually signified the difference between the 1500 and the 1500S models. The drum cars were not technically called an 'S' model and had a single exhaust.



1500S Front Trim

There are a handful of other features depending on the build date. For example, in '62, 64 and '65 the front markers were concave instead of the beehive style. The 1963 118SA models had beehives, a 1600 engine with a twin 36 Weber, side hood scoop and four speed transmission. These were built for only about six months. This was the only model designated for an offset hood scoop, although some of the hoods made their way onto the 1600S in '64.

European models had small fender mounted side repeaters and amber rear signal lamps while U.S. cars had red lenses and no repeater. The '62 also had an extra chrome strip on the hood underneath the larger hood chrome and a wide one-piece license lamp. All OSCA's had a two piece Pininfarina emblem located between the front wheel arch and the door.



1962 1500S

Interior appointments varied slightly but not much. Early models had two tone seats in either red/black or white/black combinations. The door panels were coordinated and had lower trim with a kick plate which is often missing. All of the cabriolets through 1961 had two tone door panels originally with rubber mats complimented by removable carpets with integral rubber mats and a carpeted transmission hump. Most mid 1961 and later models had solid colored seats with a different stitching pattern. OSCA models had a thin silver plastic trim fit around the lower edge of the seat. Seat adjusting levers were usually located on the body rail, although in '62 the seat adjusting lever moved to the seat bottom.



1960 OSCA Interior

The front kick panels each had map pockets and were always black. The parcel area had a flat panel on the bottom. Both the rear tub and panel matched the black seat texture, they were also all black. On 1962 models the rear parcel shelf was fully trimmed with a pattern stitched removable seat cushion. In late '61 there was an active vent window added. All cars up until 1964 had a wrinkle finished metal dash with the rear mirror affixed to the center. Window cranks also changed over the years having at least 3 different styles.



Fuse boxes were mounted inside the passenger foot well from 1959 through most of 1961 when it was then moved to the engine compartment next to the VIN tag. Column switches were a metal canister type through 1961, regardless of model including 4-wheel disc cars.



In '62, a plastic switch that fit like a sleeve over the column was introduced only to be replaced in late 1963 with a different column. Some cars had bumper mounted driving lights, likely dealer installed.

The featured car was found in Seattle Washington with some restoration work completed. Previous owners purchased it from a long-time friend that imported the OSCA after a European assignment. It is titled as a 1961, although it is actually a '62 based on the trim and other features. It is also a European model, partially evidenced by the speedometer and gauges.



European Model

U.S. Cars

It is difficult to identify the different models and doing so requires a great deal of study as well as exposure to distinguish the different model years. There are many other small changes from year to year, most of which are unnecessary to address but they are known.



This car has been refreshed to nearly 100% original and is correct for the 1962 model year. It was discovered that the car was originally white but had been completely disassembled and painted red, so it was given a fresh coat of the same red paint to match the inner body shell. Much of the chrome was redone and the stainless was polished. All of the rubber seals were replaced with the correct rubber.



1959-62 door panel

New rubber floor mats and custom made factory style carpet was fitted and installed. The seats and door panels were custom made in Italy and the correct door panel trim was polished and installed along with new OE arm rests. The panels were done in black to compliment the black interior, a slight but worthwhile deviation. The new dash wood was fashioned by hand, replicating the original look flawlessly.

There were two applications originally for the dash covering. One was a dark brown stick on vinyl and the other a real wood Mahogany veneer that brightens the entire interior. There appears to be no rhyme or reason as to which cars got which material. Two 1960 OSCA's with sequential VIN

numbers were compared. One had dark vinyl, the other had a wood trimmed dash with the rest of the interior being identical.

This OSCA's top frame was completely dismantled and painted with latches re-chromed before installing a new black canvas top and a custom fit canvas tonneau cover. Usable top latches are notoriously hard to come by. 1500/1600 OSCA's originally came with a vinyl top and tonneau matching the interior texture. Hard tops were also available with an optional window height rear shelf to trim out the interior.

The 1500 OSCA engine was recently completely rebuilt. The front suspension and the brakes were completely gone through and new Pirelli Cinturato tires were fitted. The electrical system was completely inspected and repaired with all new lenses and correct H4 headlights, including built in running lamps, fuel sender and new column switch installed. The gauges were cleaned and calibrated.

These cars are rapidly increasing in value and are now highly collectible. Most of the FIAT OSCA cars sat in disrepair for decades due to both lack of technical skill as well as lack of parts. Only now are they beginning to be appreciated as a true Italian hand built sports car, comparable to an Alfa Giulietta Spider of the same era. Values could easily push \$100,000 or more as other Italian collectibles and exotics become even more untouchable. It is not uncommon to see the same unrestored cars being passed around and resold to unwitting buyers who quickly learn the difficulty in obtaining correct parts, especially engine components, for a complete restoration.

Although any OSCA is rare, the 1961 4-wheel disc 1500S may be the rarest of all. The elegant and powerful (for the period) Fiat OSCA transformed into the greatly undervalued, dual Weber, 5 speed 1600S of 1965 and ultimately to the highly successful Fiat 124 Spider in 1967.

The featured 1500S has been thoroughly inspected and compared to the factory parts manual. They are not especially complicated to restore, but parts are still difficult to find, sometimes costly or simply obsolete. Very few cars if any are anywhere near as correct as this vehicle. It appears to have been well taken care of and a refresh was just completed on it. This is a good example of a factory Fiat 1500S and serves as an excellent comparison when considering one of these cars, restored or not. The car received a professional attention to detail restoration by the author, a mark specialist. All mechanicals were rebuilt/ restored to original specifications.

There are few OSCA 1961 4-wheel disc cabriolet's known to exist, perhaps a few hundred. The total FIAT OSCA production number (all years) is widely speculated upon, with a few thousand as a common estimate. Very few are road worthy, and only a handful are show worthy examples. This early 62 Fiat OSCA 1500S is a delight to show and drive, top up or down.....It's a true Italian!