

Fiat is turning its Panda city cars into a whole family of 'multi-energy' vehicles



Stellantis-owned Fiat revealed five new concepts that it says will serve as inspiration for a future family of vehicles that will come in a variety of powertrains while sharing the same platform.

The new lineup, inspired by the Italian automaker's Panda city cars, will kick off in July 2024 with a new city car, followed by a new vehicle each year for the following three years. In addition, the concepts preview a pickup truck, a fastback sedan, an SUV, and a camper.

Fiat is hedging its bets, committing to producing not only electric versions of each vehicle but also hybrid and internal combustion engine versions. The automaker says this is to "ensure maximum relevance to customers wherever they live in the world."

The new lineup, inspired by the Italian automaker's Panda city

cars, will kick off in July 2024

The announcement, timed for the Geneva International Motor Show this week, follows several months of slowing EV sales growth in most markets, as automakers struggle to produce affordable models and a working charging infrastructure. Hybrids, meanwhile, have been selling at a brisker pace than pure battery-electric vehicles.

Fiat is a leader in compact car sales, having sold 1.3 million vehicles in 2023, but has been struggling to maintain its presence in North America. The brand only moved 605 vehicles in the US last year, down about 33 percent from 2022. The Fiat 500e, the company's new compact EV, is aimed at the North American market – but it's unclear whether US car buyers are interested in something so small.

The new Panda lineup is intended to position Fiat as a brand with ideas that extend beyond tiny city cars. The boxy concepts will undoubtedly go through some changes before they become reality, so it's unclear whether they'll keep their bold primary colors and whimsical designs. Fiat says the new vehicles are intended to be both inspirational and utilitarian. Or, as the automaker puts it, "Functionality should never exist without Fun."

"Look, we like having fun," Fiat CEO Olivier Francois said in a charming video introducing the concepts. "We don't take ourselves too seriously."

[a: hover\]: text-black \[a: hover\]: shadow-underline-black dark: \[a: hover\]: text-gray-e9 dark: \[a: hover\]: shadow-underline-gray-63 \[a\]: shadow-underline-gray-13 dark: \[a\]: shadow-underline-gray-63">Shred, then store.](#)

Francois says the city car will be based on the Stellantis "multi-energy platform," meaning it will be available globally and compatible with all kinds of fuel (or lack thereof).

There are also some neat tricks, like a “self-winding” charging cable that Fiat says will make plugging and unplugging the vehicle easier. A high-riding position is meant to improve visibility for anyone driving the city car in an urban environment. But interior space is meant to invite drivers to take road trips or weekend excursions as well.

a: hover]: text- black [& > a: hover]: shadow- underline- black
dark: [& > a: hover]: text- gray- e9 dark: [& > a: hover]: shadow-
underline- gray- 63 [& > a]: shadow- underline- gray- 13
dark: [& > a]: shadow- underline- gray- 63”> *Fiat Panda SUV concept.*

Replace the rear bed with a more aero-focused rear end, and you’ve got the fastback concept. Inspired by the Fiat Fastback in Brazil and the Fiat Tipo in the Middle East and Africa, the concept is aimed at the South American, Middle Eastern, and African markets as well as Europe.

Francois says the “sporty touch” will help broaden the appeal. Or it can be supersized to transform it into an SUV, which the company calls its “Giga-Panda.” A step above the brand’s small car roots, the SUV concept will be aimed at families and those in need of more space. Under the hood – or floorboards, as it were – the Panda SUV concept will come in pure battery-electric, hybrid, or gas-powered engine models.

And lastly, a camper concept is for when you need to take the trip off the beaten path. “This concept pays homage to the ‘Fun-ctionality’ of the Panda from the 80s, recalling the versatility of a car that was made for the city with the features of a SUV and the soul of a trusty companion,” the company says.

It’s not clear which of these concepts will make it to the final stage and which will be left on the cutting room floor. Fiat is only committing to releasing four new vehicles over the next four years, despite unveiling a total of five concepts today. Hopefully the secret skateboard compartment

survives to the end.

<https://www.theverge.com/24083454/fiat-panda-family-concept-ev-hybrid-truck-suv>