



# Ford Ka

Featuring Ka<sup>3</sup>



## What's different?

**Mechanically, Ka<sup>3</sup> is almost identical to Ka<sup>2</sup>, but adds alloy wheels, air conditioning, a leather steering wheel and gear knob, and an upgraded radio/CD to Ford's pint-sized performer. These up the price by some £800, yet save nearly £300 compared with equipping a Ka<sup>2</sup> to the same level from the options list.**

**H**AVING ALREADY SAMPLED FORD'S A-Class contender in low- and mid-range form, it was tempting to leave it at that. But an opportunity to renew our acquaintance with this delightful little performer in top-level Ka<sup>3</sup> guise was an offer we couldn't refuse.

Sales got off to a bit of a shaky start, but the bug-eyed Ka is becoming an increasingly familiar sight on our roads as word of its endearing, almost sporty, character spreads and the conservative British public warms to the small Ford's "new edge" looks.

All three versions of Ka now sport power steering as standard, along with lower gearing to offset the additional drain on modest underbonnet resources. Power assistance can be omitted from the basic Ka if you choose, with the delete cost option saving some £400. Compared with a basic Ka with manual steering, the power-assisted version's shorter-legged gearing hurts economy and open-road tranquillity to a degree. The less encumbered manual steering version proves a shade sprightlier in pedal-to-the-metal acceleration, but the shorter gearing provides a distinct pay-off in the higher gears. Both versions feel more fun, refined and nipper than dated 60bhp pushrod power lurking under the bonnet might lead you to expect.

## PERFORMANCE

### Acceleration time in seconds

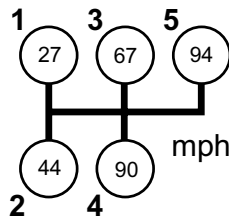
mph	30	40	50	60	70
<b>THROUGH THE GEARS</b>	2.5 → 6.0 → 10.7 → 17.3				
<b>IN 5TH GEAR</b>	7.0 → 13.9 → 22.4 → 33.4				
<b>IN 4TH GEAR</b>	4.8 → 9.9 → 15.9 → 23.4				

20 mph	30	40	50	60	70
<b>5TH/4TH SPEED RANGES</b>	14.0/9.7		15.4/11.1		
	13.9/9.9			19.5/13.5	

### Maximum speeds

REVS PER MINUTE	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
	5500*	5500	4560		

\* for best acceleration



## FUEL CONSUMPTION

Fuel grade: unleaded Premium, 95 octane	
<b>Type of use - air conditioning off*</b>	<b>mpg</b>
In the city – heavy traffic	26
In the country – quiet driving	51
<b>Typical mpg overall</b>	<b>42</b>
Realistic tank range† litres/300miles	33

\*with air conditioning switched on, consumption will increase by 2–4% in winter and 4–8% in summer

## FOR THE TECHNICAL

Same as for Ka<sup>2</sup> (see R9708) except for:

### TRANSMISSION

Mph per 1000rpm 20.6 in 5th, 16.4 in 4th

### CHASSIS

#### Steering

rack and pinion with hydraulic power assistance; 2.8 turns between full locks. Turning circles average 10.1m between kerbs, with 13.9m circle for one turn of the wheel

#### Wheels

5J x 14 alloy with 165/60R14 tyres; full-size (steel) spare

#### Brakes

solid discs front, drums rear with vacuum servo. Electronic anti lock (optional on all models) fitted to test car

All versions feel frisky and alert from behind the wheel. However, despite the lower gearing and impaired economy that accompany power steering, we much prefer the assisted helm's tauter, more fluid responses, while a full one-and-a-half fewer arm-twirling turns between full locks prove a distinct advantage around town. The leather-clad wheel and gear knob only add to Ka<sup>3</sup>'s sporting flavour, but a rev counter (and even a water temperature gauge) remain notable absentees from the fascia.

While cheaper versions ride firmly, isolating all but the occasional jolt, the Ka<sup>3</sup>'s 14in alloy wheels, shod with squatter, 60-series tyres, allow a degree more turbulence through to the cabin. Poise, grip and "feel good" factor are still present in copious measure, but at times the ride feels just a little too "sporty", considering that Ka<sup>3</sup> brings no more peppiness to the party.

Revisiting Ka also gave us an opportunity to sample the (optional on all models) ABS brake set-up – combined with a passenger's airbag as a £500 Safety Pack. This delivers the same easy-to-control, progressive stopping power in normal use, yet overcomes a tendency to lock a front wheel in panic stops – something we've encountered on both Ka and a Fiesta recently.

Air conditioning – with its attendant fuel economy penalty, if you use it – might seem an unnecessary extravagance on a car like this. Yet apart from its much-appreciated cooling when the thermometer starts to climb, the Ka's "cold blow" set-up proves equally effective in dealing with the rear quarter windows' propensity to mist up in less clement conditions.

With only three doors, two rear seatbelts and a distinctly, let's say cosy back seat, the Ka is always going to prove more convincing in second-car use than in providing the sole means of family transport. But the weekly shopping haul shoehorns in surprisingly easily, and as well as the convenience of a 50/50-split folding rear seat, dearer Kas also sport two-position backrest rake adjustment – allowing occasional bulky purchases to be carried home, without having to leave back seat passengers to catch the bus home.

### VERDICT

**Spending almost £10,000 on the three-door only, dock-tailed Ka raises the natural question "Why not have the roomier, but still compact, Fiesta instead?" That, too, is a delight to drive and is not only a little more accommodating all round, but also sports more modern (and more manly) Zetec power under the bonnet. That would, however, be to deny the Ka's obvious visual, not to mention dynamic, appeal; and there will always be buyers for whom bigger doesn't necessarily mean better.**

**For such owners, the well equipped and eminently practical town runabout Ka<sup>3</sup> provides just as much all-round satisfaction as purchasers of the more prosaic Ka and Ka<sup>2</sup> will experience. But there remains a slight disappointment that Ford didn't manage to shoehorn a few more horses under the bonnet for its top Ka. We would like to see Ka<sup>4</sup> with a Fiesta-sourced 90bhp Zetec engine up front. How about it, Ford?**