

Ford Focus

Featured model: 1.8TDCi Estate



FORD'S FOCUS HAS TWO SETS of changes for 2002. The first is largely cosmetic and to do with interior features. The second is that the model's diesel engine has been brought bang up to date with second-generation "common rail" injection.

A full description of its working principles is given in report R0117, but here we give full test results of an estate car so fitted. We would expect the five-door hatchback to produce slightly improved figures – perhaps another mpg or so.

As things stand, the estate car goes very nicely, thank you, but the body style does accentuate the engine's proneness to vibrancy below 1500rpm, especially when it's pulling hard in the higher gears. This deters the driver from using its willingness to accelerate determinedly from these low revs, and as the power tails off past 4000rpm, as well, you have to get used to this more restricted window of accelerative opportunity, compared with a petrol motor.

It must be admitted that these low-speed vibes are the bane of most modern four-cylinder DI diesels; further, the Focus expresses the problem more in the estate than in other body styles.

Start-up and tickover activity is definitely more muted than with the (still available) TD DI/90bhp version, on which this new engine is based; it now compares extremely favourably, in terms of noise control, with Peugeot and VW alternatives.

The trouble with such a thermally efficient engine is that there's less wasted

heat to drive the air conditioner; our car also suffered from even cooler delivery to the front passenger's footwell than to the driver's. Full climate control (now standard on the Ghia) seems to overcome the problem, however, so it might be worth paying extra on the LX or Zetec.

Apart from repositioning of indicators and other external lights, plus the addition of bumper protection strips, the Focus is little changed outside. Inside, an optional Versatility Pack is worth a look – it doesn't make the model into an MPV, but it certainly accommodates families' diverse needs better.

The other really useful revision to recent cars is the way that the cushion (as well as the backrest) is now asymmetrically split. It will fold properly (if not completely flat), yet let someone sit in the back at the same time.

VERDICT

We like the Focus estate; there's no loss of quality or comfort in the back seat, but the obvious benefits of having no load sill and an impressively spacious, uncluttered luggage deck are there for all to appreciate. It rides and handles with the aplomb that's the hallmark of the Focus range, and this new diesel version suits its go-anywhere, tackle anything character well. Just quell those lower-speed vibes and we would have little to complain about.

AT A GLANCE

considering size, price and rivals

Overtaking ability	☆☆☆☆○○
Space/practicality	☆☆☆☆○○
Controls/displays	☆☆☆☆○○
Safety	☆☆☆☆○○
Handling/steering	☆☆☆☆○○
Comfort	☆☆☆☆○○
Fuel economy	☆☆☆☆○○

SPECIFICATION

engine 1753cc, 4 cylinder, diesel; 115bhp at 3800rpm, 184 lb ft at 1850rpm; belt/chain-driven single overhead camshaft, 8 valves

transmission 5-speed manual, front-wheel drive; 28.9 mph/1000rpm in 5th, 22.3 in 4th

suspension front: independent damper/struts with integral coil springs
Rear: independent multi-links with coil springs

steering hydraulic power assistance; 2.9 turns lock-to-lock; 10.6m diameter turning circle between kerbs (15.2m for one turn of the wheel)

brakes ventilated discs, front drums rear, with optional anti-lock control (ABS) incorporating traction control, fitted to test car

wheels/tyres 6in alloy with 195/60R15 tyres - Ghia version; temporary spare

LIKES ...

easy-to-use radio controls
tall seating makes entry/egress easy
bonnet lock controlled by key
no special oil required for diesel

and GRIPES

poor lumbar support – only Ghia OK
dribbles down screen after wash/wipe
no centre roof lamp
rear head restraints hard to remove

THE FOCUS RANGE

size and type lower-medium (mid-priced) saloon, hatchback and estate

trim levels CL, LX, Ghia

engines petrol: 4 cylinder/1.4 litre/75bhp, 4/1.6/100; 4/1.8/115; 4/2.0/130
diesel: 4/1.75/90, 1.4/1.75/115

drive front-wheel drive, 5-speed manual; (4-speed stepped automatic available on 1.6 petrol)

OVERTAKING ABILITY ★☆☆○○					
<i>Now an easy match for established rivals, but useable rev band somewhat limited, so lots of gearchanging needed to keep the pace up</i>					
acceleration in seconds	through gears*	④ th gear	⑤ th gear		
20-40mph	3.3	9.2	No		
30-50mph	4.0	6.4	11.2		
40-60mph	5.0	6.0	8.8		
50-70mph	6.4	6.3	8.7		
30-70mph	10.4	12.7	19.9		
max speed in each gear (*using 4000rpm for best acceleration)					
gear	①*	②*	③*	④*	⑤
speed (mph)	22½	40	60½	89	116

SPACE AND PRACTICALITY ★☆☆○○			
<i>Not only roomy, but regular shape for load space and now features 60/40 split rear cushion, as well. A very comfortable back seat, too</i>			
<i>in centimetres (5-door estate)</i>		inside	(† with sunroof)
outside		front - legroom	85-107
length	444	- headroom	89-94†
width - inc mirrors	200	rear - typical leg/	100/
- mirrors folded	177	kneeroom	71
height (no roof bars)	143	- headroom	97
load sill height	0/	- hiproom	128-131
(inside/outside)	83	load space (all seats in use)	
steering		(litres/cu ft)	570/20.2
turns lock-to-lock	2.9	load length	97-165
turning circle (metres)	10.6	full length to fascia	No
easy to park/garage?		load width	117-123
	★☆☆○○	load height (to shelf/	49/
		to top of aperture)	82

CONTROLS AND DISPLAYS ★☆☆○○	
<i>Front seats need Ghia's lumbar adjuster – even then it's only for driver. Pleasantly high-set cushions, though. Plenty of curves around fascia, but clear dials, easy radio settings. Unremarkable gearshift quality</i>	
	

HOW THE FOCUS EST. DIESEL COMPARES	engine cyl/cap/power (no/cc/bhp)	revs at 70mph (rpm)	30-70mph through gears (sec)	30-70mph in 5th/4th gears (sec)	fuel economy (mpg)	brakes – best stop from 50mph (m/kg)	maximum legroom - front (cm)	typical leg/ kneeroom - rear (cm)	steering turns/ circle (m)	overall length (cm)
FORD FOCUS 1.8 TDCi	4/1753/115	2420	10.4	19.9/12.7	50½	25½/19*	107	100/71	2.9/10.6	444
VW Golf TDi (115) 6 speed	4/1896/115	2000	10.3	18.8/13.3	51	25½/26*	109	96/72	3.1/10.3	440
Vauxhall Astra 2.0 Di	4/1994/82	2740	12.8	22.1/15.9	51½	26/21	108	95/70	3.1/10.4	429
Skoda Octavia 1.9 TDi	4/1896/110	2540	10.7	21.3/15.5	54½	24/27*	112	97/72	3.1/10.5	451
Citroën Picasso 2.0 HDi	4/1997/90	2480	14.0	27.0/18.6	50	26/16*	106	95/72	3.3/11.9	428
Ford Escort 1.8TD †	4/1753/88	2800	12.6	24.0/15.3	48	25/34*	106	98/69	3.0/10.4	411

† 1993/indirect injection * with ABS

SAFETY ★☆☆○○	
<i>A sensibly progressive consistent braking response – but ABS should be standard. An alarm is also an option but one does enjoy convenient and effective double door-locking</i>	
braking	
pedal feel	★☆☆○○
in emergency	★☆☆○○
handbrake	★☆☆○○
dry road stopping distance	from 50mph (with optional ABS)
pedal load	distance
unhurried 10kg	31½m
sudden 19kg	25½m best stop
+4kg ie 23kg	25½m

EURO NCAP CRASH TEST RATINGS (tested January 1999)	
front impact %	NA
side impact %	NA
overall	★☆☆○○
pedestrian rating	★☆☆○○

SECURITY FEATURES		
central locking	✓	alarm 0
remote control	✓	immobiliser ✓
auto window closure	✓	luggage security ★☆☆○○
deadlocks	✓	
✓ standard	0 factory option	* not available

HANDLING AND STEERING ★☆☆○○	
<i>Wonderfully poised cornering, precise steering with no bump-deviation; estate loses little to hatch and saloon</i>	
	

COMFORT ★☆☆○○	
<i>Rides well – just a shade firmer than hatch when unladen. Ghia's tyres do it no favours, however – LX more compliant. Some engine vibes at low rpm – worse in estate. Heater puny</i>	

FUEL ECONOMY ★☆☆○○	
<i>Excellent main road cruising economy – these figures will be slightly bettered by hatchback version, we guess. Easy-filler, too, with good range</i>	
type of use (air conditioning off)	AA test (mpg)
urban (17mph average/heavy traffic)	30½
suburban (27mph average/6.4 miles from cold start)	42
motorway (70mph cruising)	49
cross-country (brisk driving/20 miles from cold start)	51
rural (gentle driving/20 miles from cold start)	59½
typical mpg overall	50½
realistic tank capacity/range	49 litres/545 miles
official mpg (urban/extra urban/combined)	39.2/62.8/51.4
CO ₂ emissions 145g/km	car tax band A