

Ford Galaxy

Featuring 2.0i GLX



THE GALAXY IS FORD'S ANSWER TO THE trendsetting Renault Espace. In fact, the VW Sharan is its clone – apart from different engines in the two-litre versions, plus minor equipment variations, they're essentially the same development, built in a new factory in Portugal. VW influence is very apparent as you get to know the model, from door handles and intermittent wiper function to rear suspension layout, the German company's influence on the design and the details show everywhere.

Ford's two-litre engine in our test car acquits itself quite well, but it suffers the inevitable effects of a 275kg weight penalty, compared with a Mondeo estate car. This engine, derived from that in the Scorpio, is a respectable low-speed lugger, but is prone to some harshness around 50mph, and again near the legal motoring limit; designed to meet the latest emission rules, it also betrays ragged wide-throttle acceleration in the higher gears. Fairly low gearing and a healthy torque output keep these in-gear acceleration times respectable, but ultimate, high-revving overtaking

ability is well short of a 1.8 Mondeo estate car's, not to mention the two litre's. Fuel thirst is commendably restrained, however, which opens up an excellent (480 mile) range between forecourt visits.

Our reservations about this engine come with unqualified praise for the rest of the Galaxy's running gear. Its ride and handling set new standards for this type of people carrier. Some thump over cat's eyes and ridges, on our test car's non-standard 60-Series lower-profile tyres, was the only aspect that put the car at a disadvantage, compared with a Peugeot 806 we sampled on a back-to-back assessment. In terms of damping control, steering accuracy and willingness to be hustled into the turn, this Ford showed an overall superiority to the Peugeot. With the ABS option on our car, emergency braking was powerful and assured. With sensible pedal pressures that aren't too light, the non-ABS version should be progressive as well. Some fade occurred, but a similar test on a Sharan revealed none – perhaps the pads were past their best.

The cockpit is also better. The standard-position

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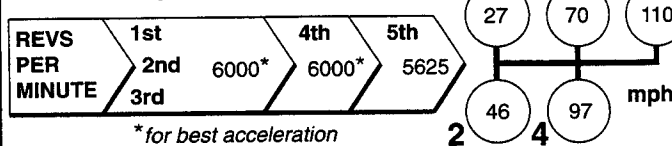
PERFORMANCE

Acceleration time in seconds

mph	30	40	50	60	70
THROUGH THE GEARS		2.2	5.2	8.9	13.6
IN 5TH GEAR		7.3	14.0	21.4	30.0
IN 4TH GEAR		5.2	10.5	16.3	22.3

20 mph	30	40	50	60	70
5TH/4TH SPEED RANGES		14.7/10.8		14.1/11.1	
			14.0/10.5		16.0/11.8

Maximum speeds



FUEL CONSUMPTION

Worst/best mpg	25/40
Typical mpg overall	34
Realistic tank range*	65 litres/480 miles

* based on fuel gauge, warning lamp and filling station experience

SAFETY AND SECURITY FEATURES

Assessed on their effectiveness and convenience (the more black blobs the better)

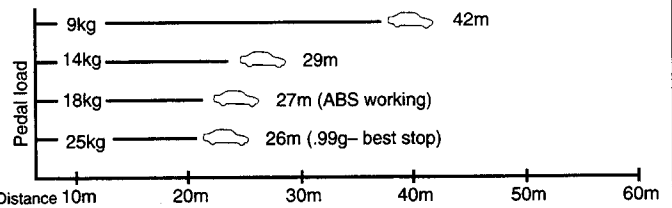
Seatbelts	front ●●●●○ rear ●●●○○	Door locking	●●●●○
Head restraints	front ●●●●○ rear ●●●○○	central locking?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Interior	safety padding ●●●●○	remote control?	<input type="checkbox"/>
driver's airbag?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	auto window closure?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
other airbags?	<input type="checkbox"/>	deadlocks?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
side impact protection	●●●○○	Luggage	secure from interior/hidden <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Fuel anti-spillage	●●●●○	from view	○○○○○
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> standard on test car	<input type="checkbox"/> factory fitted option	Alarm	<input type="checkbox"/>
		engine immobilised?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

standard on test car factory fitted option not available

BRAKES

Pedal feel ●●●○○ Behaviour in an emergency ●●●●○ Handbrake ●●●●○

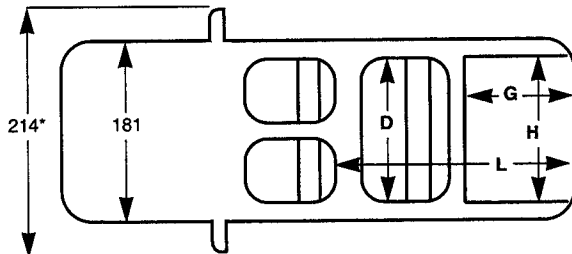
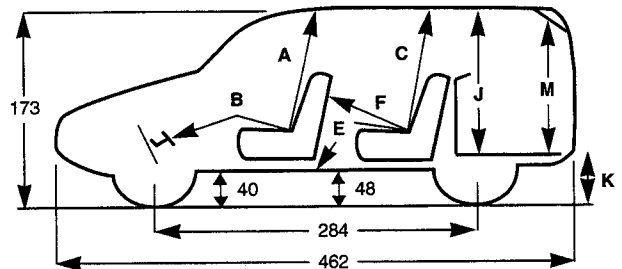
Dry road stopping distance from 50mph (with ABS option)
(A good-to-average best stop is about 28m at 20-30kg pedal load)



Fade test: pedal load required for a moderate (34m/.75g) stop:
11kg at start of test, 18kg at end of test. (Ideal brakes show no change)

DIMENSIONS

Centimetres



* 197 with mirrors folded

Inside – figures in brackets are for third row of seats, set fully back

A Front headroom	96-102	G Load length † (third row out)	124/112
B Front legroom (min - max)	86-108	H Load floor width (at floor/waist level)	112/116
C Headroom	95 (87)	J Maximum load height	117
D Width – between armrests	146 (116)	K Sill height (inner/outer)	0/56
E Typical † legroom	95/104 (95/91)	L Load length (third row in use/tilted forwards)	211 (38/80)
F Typical † knee room	74/84 (74/65)	M Load height (to tailgate hinge)	103

† middle seats set fully forward/fully back

* "Typical" represents the mean measurement behind the driver's seat set at 100cm legroom and the passenger's seat set at 105cm

gearshift and handbrake don't get in the way too much and the shift's precision, backed up by a progressive, hydraulic clutch of medium effort, is a pleasure to use. Reach-and-rake-adjustable steering and a seat height adjuster are real pampering and the seat itself is firm yet supportive, with generous rearward travel for the lanky. Getting into the front is an easier climb than into the back, where the less agile would benefit from a step.

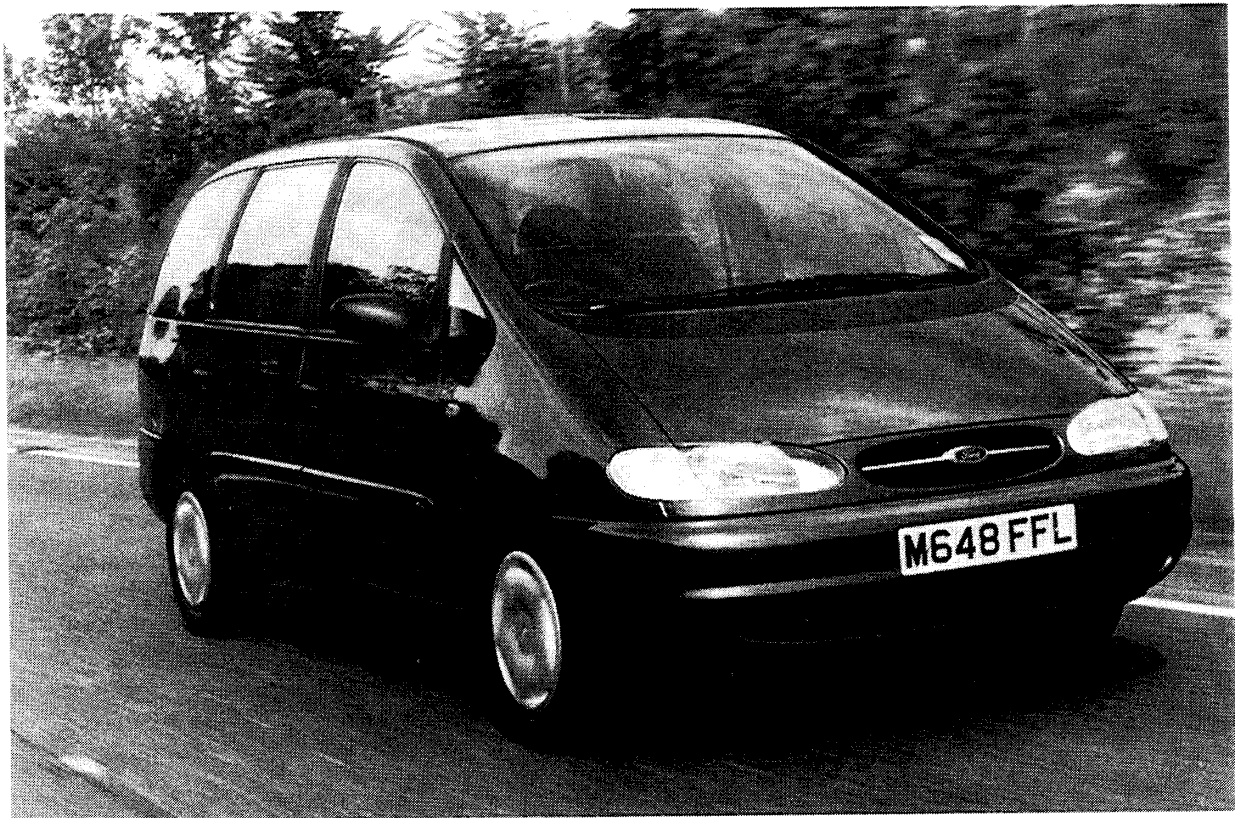
The model's apparent bulk can intimidate less experienced drivers, but in practice, it's the width and the frontal overhang, rather than its length, that call for the most care in tight spaces. The door mirrors do fold manually, but not flush with the door panels.

The other concern is the obstruction to the driver's front quarter view presented by thick screen pillars and adjacent unwiped glass. By the way, on a misty morning, it's well-nigh impossible to safely wipe the inside of the windscreen, unless you stop the car – the

optional "Quick-clear" heated screen looks an irresistible bargain at £75. The rear wash and wipe/heat services are convenient and the front intermittent wipe facility is the useful infinitely variable sort not yet seen on other Fords.

Multi-purpose vehicles, as the name implies, must be ready for anything and the Galaxy obliges with amenities never seen on mere estate cars. The front seats swivel to face rearwards and all the others remove (they weigh 17kg) or slide to and fro to share out the legroom. Alternative mounts for the middle row mean that you can have two abreast with stretching and step-through space, rather than an undulating bench. There's a table on their backs, power points and even a separate rear heater with its own controls – it works very well, too. There's no cool air provision at face level, but then neither is there any up front with the heater on.

As a five-seater plus luggage or a seven-seater with



Likes . . . and gripes

- Remote stalk for radio . . . but too easily confused with one for indicators
- Backrest rake adjusters on every seat . . . but they're too small and stiff
- Left footrest . . . but tends to be too close for comfort
- Clever overlapping wipers . . . but bad blind spot around screen pillar
- Generous rear footwell heater . . . works better than front one

none, the Galaxy feels fine. The most serious unresolved problem is that to fold a rear seat forward out of the way (to give a reasonable luggage floor area) you have to slide the outside and centre ones in front of it, fully forward to their diminished-legroom position. Cargo space and restored legroom are truly generous if the rear seats are removed entirely, but this can be laborious, as well as cramping your style in mid-journey, should people or cargo priorities change. The tailgate is a mite heavy to open and close and it's easy to break your nails on the external latch; the door handles can pinch your hand if you're not careful, too.

Security includes double door locking (so the interior releases won't work) and automatic window closure. You can leave a child or dog ventilated without the "deadlocking", but you have to be deft; the rather puny optional remote handset only added to our confusion. The system can be controlled from both front doors or the tailgate, in any case.

Safety credentials are impressive, with pyrotechnics to operate the front seatbelts and height adjustment for four of the seven seats; the driver gets an airbag, as well. The view out is good, but not as lofty as in a Land Rover.

VERDICT

The Galaxy/Sharan is the best MPV so far, from the driver's point of view. This is in spite of our mild reservations concerning the Ford two-litre engine – we look forward to trying the VW. In most other respects, however, the Galaxy lives up to its promises – the versatile seating permutations are accompanied by plenty of comfort and convenience features. If only you could fold the rear seats out of the way with the middle row pushed back, there would be little reason to consider an estate car instead.

Except for those who are intimidated by its width, the Galaxy is a pleasure to drive and can rise to any occasion, whether it's business or pleasure. It firmly establishes itself as a better on-road vehicle than any four-wheel driver currently on offer.

FOR THE TECHNICAL

ENGINE

Type transverse four cylinder with iron block and alloy head; five main bearings

Size 86mm bore x 86mm stroke = 1998cc

Power 115bhp at 5500rpm

Torque 125 lb ft at 2300rpm

Valves chain-driven twin overhead camshafts with hydraulic tappets, actuating two valves per cylinder

Fuel/ignition electronic multi-point fuel injection with programmed integrated spark timing. Three-way catalyser with exhaust gas recirculation and secondary air injection. 70-litre tank with low-level warning lamp

TRANSMISSION

Type five-speed manual, front-wheel drive

Mph per 1000rpm 19.6 in 5th, 16.2 in 4th

CHASSIS

Suspension front: independent by MacPherson struts, coil springs and an anti-roll bar.

Rear: independent semi-trailing arms (sub-frame mounted) with coil springs and an anti-roll bar. Gas-filled dampers all round

Steering power-assisted rack and pinion with 3.3 turns between full locks. Turning circles average 11.3m between kerbs, with 18.2m circle for one turn of the wheel

Wheels 6J steel with 195/65R15H tyres standard. (205/60R15H Continental fitted to test car)

Brakes solid discs front and rear with vacuum servo (optional electronic ABS fitted to test car)

