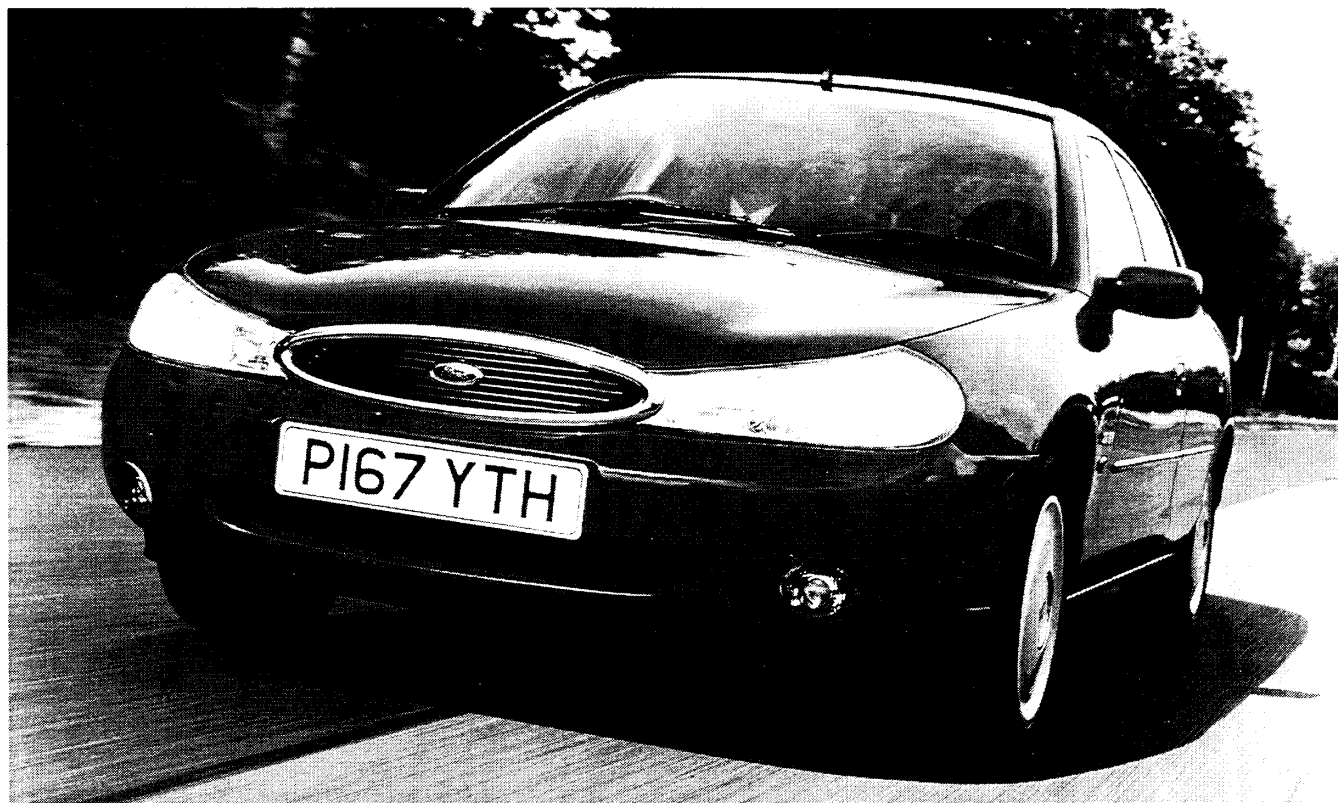




Ford Mondeo for 1997

Featuring 1.6 5-door



What's new?

Minor restyling and interior accommodation changes to make present Mondeo owners restive. The 1.6-litre engine takes on diesel's gearing in pursuit of class-leading mpg.

MOST MANUFACTURERS CHARGE MORE for their bigger-engined versions, even though the trim and kit are the same. Ford doesn't with the Mondeo – you can have a two-litre for the same price as a 1.6, so why consider the lower-powered version? The answer for 1997 is fuel economy and a long pair of legs. Ford uses the diesel's gearbox with an even higher final drive ratio to endow the 90bhp Aspen basic version with a 26.7mph per 1000rpm loping top gear – that means a mere 2620rpm on the tacho at the legal limit.

So far so good. It makes for effortless motorway cruising and, incidentally, the promise of long engine life for a unit so unstressed – one reason why diesels go on for so long. Unlike a diesel, such as Ford's 1.8TD (available for an extra £635 at present), petrol engines don't contend with high gearing so well because strong in-gear response requires a lot of

lower-speed torque (twisting force) rather than ultimate top-end power. This 1.6 has 100 lb ft of it at a typical mid-range 3500rpm, whereas the turbo-diesel offers 30 per cent more at 1250 fewer revs. The result is almost identical acceleration when both are stretched through the gears (30–70mph in 14.6sec), but a dramatic difference in favour of the diesel when both accelerators are pushed into the carpet in top or fourth. In fact, treated that way, the diesel does as well as the lower geared 1.8; our respective tests reveal all.

We were somewhat disappointed with the 1.6's motorway fuel consumption, as well, and mixing it on ordinary roads does mean using a lower gear and higher revs, to get a move on. Our strictly controlled cycle tests did, however, produce mpg benefits in all conditions except the motorway, compared with the 115bhp 1.8. Nevertheless, a wide throttle was needed at times to keep to the rates of acceleration programmed into the test cycle and 30mph is the slowest you'll want to go in fourth gear.

1997-range revisions

The exterior styling changes are obvious, but subtle rearrangements to interior furniture have enhanced rear kneeroom in particular and produced a very comfortable settee at the back. The one-piece cushion

Continued on page 3

PERFORMANCE

Acceleration time in seconds

mph	30	40	50	60	70
THROUGH THE GEARS					
	2.4	5.3	9.7	14.6	
IN 5TH GEAR					
	10.3	21.3	33.4	47.6	
IN 4TH GEAR					
	7.1	14.3	22.0	30.9	

20 mph	30	40	50	60	70
5TH/4TH SPEED RANGES	20.8/14.1		23.1/14.9		
	21.3/14.3		26.3/16.6		

Maximum speeds

REVS PER MINUTE: 1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th
 5750* 5325 3900
 *for best acceleration
 28 83 104 51 111 mph

FUEL CONSUMPTION

Fuel grade for tests: unleaded Premium, 95 octane

Normal range	mpg
Hard driving, heavy traffic	31½
Short journeys in the suburbs	30½
Motorway – 70mph cruising	40½
Brisk driving, mixed roads	39
Gentle driving, rural roads	45½
Typical mpg overall	39
Realistic tank range*	53 litres/455 miles

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

SAFETY AND SECURITY FEATURES

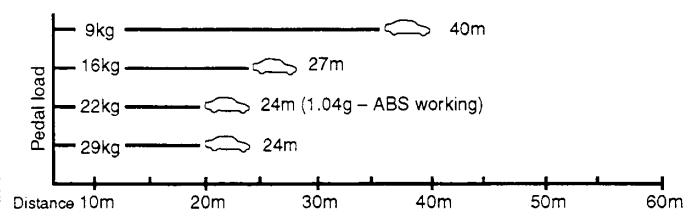
Assessed on their effectiveness and convenience
(the more black blobs the better)

Seatbelts		Door locking		●●●●○
front	●●●●○	rear	●●●●○	
		central locking?		☒
Head restraints		remote control?		☒
front	●●●●○	rear	☒	
		auto window closure?		☒
		deadlocks?		☒
Interior		Luggage		
safety padding	●●●●○	secure from interior/hidden		
driver's airbag?	☒	from view	●●●●○	
other airbags?	☐			
side impact protection	●●●●○	Alarm	●●●●○	
Fuel anti-spillage	●●●●○	engine immobilised?		☒
☒ standard on test car		☐ factory fitted option		☒ not available

BRAKES

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

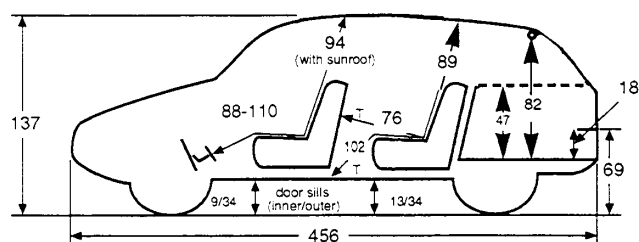
Dry road stopping distance from 50mph (with ABS)
(A good-to-average best stop is about 28m at 20-30kg pedal load)



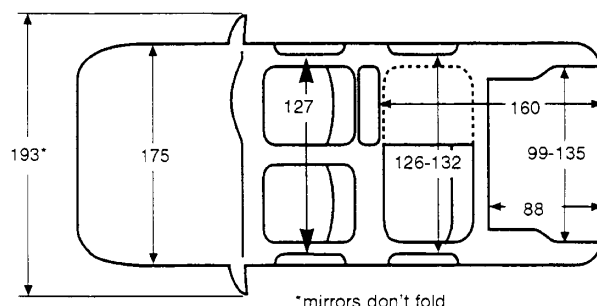
Fade test: pedal load required for a moderate (34m/.75g) stop:
11½kg at start of test, 14kg at end of test. (*Ideal brakes show no change*)

MEASUREMENTS

Centimetres



T: typical back seat space behind medium-sized front occupants



lifts easily on the five-door without causing seatbelt mayhem and the centre belt is now the full three-point inertia sort, with a much reinforced two-piece backrest to take the strain. Cleverly, this belt won't unreel unless the bigger nearside section of the seat is securely fastened, but we noted the former releases (under the load cover) in the boot have been deleted. Greater safety but less security for boot contents is the result – the releases are now in full view on top of the backrests.

Drivers who know their Mondeos will note the lighter, cable-operated gearchange, which has quite a short movement across the gate. The 1.6 engine, though not aspiring to Honda standards, is quieter and less vibrant than the two-litre, so here again is a case of more for less. The cushion thigh adjustment works ideally with the steering reach and rake lever to guarantee a good driving position for most shapes and sizes – an excellent arrangement that's standard on every Mondeo.

Apart from its security implications, we found the handset or key-operated double door locking, perimeter alarm and immobiliser built into the key so convenient to use; there's a volume-sensing alarm for

those who demand it, but this system is ideal to live with and, again, the Aspen isn't the deprived poor relation. You can key-open the tailgate without sounding the alarm when returning to the car, but it won't open when the ignition is on – good for on-street security.

VERDICT

Fuel and insurance savings are to be made by opting for a 1.6 Mondeo, but there's a price to pay in accelerator response – although progress is effortless once you've got there. No, the biggest cost saving is being able to have an Aspen rather than an LX – you suffer few deprivations and save over £1100 up front.

Our choice would be a 1.8 Aspen – except that you can't have one. Consider the 1.8 turbo-diesel instead if you're really serious about the fuel bills.

As for the other aspects of the '97 Mondeo, it's subtle but useful revisions all round, making a nice car even better. There may be a lot of them out there, but that doesn't lessen its proficiency to please both keener drivers and disinterested passengers.

Likes . . . and gripes

Handy manual mirror levers . . . but electric mirrors would be better than electric windows
 Proper "air-off" position on heater . . . but no screen and vent flow simultaneously
 Useful parking lamp . . . but light switch selects it too easily
 Heated front screen option . . . but heated tailgate elements don't encompass wiper blade

