

Ford Mondeo

Featured models: 1.8LX 4 and 5 door



FORD'S BIGGEST PROBLEM IS that it sells so many cars. In a market place where exclusivity is more important to some than sheer ability, the previous Mondeo, like the Fiesta, was affected by its own success – "great performers, but too many about".

For a while, at least, the new Mondeo is unmistakably different; bigger than its predecessor, with a VW Passat-ish rear aspect. Inside, too, it's really roomy, with both saloon and five-door also offering commodious luggage space, even before their back seats are folded forwards.

They both have a one-piece rear cushion (which limits versatility), but on the five-door it will tilt upright to give a flat load deck, with nicely trimmed nether regions. The saloon's split backrests merely hinge to present an angled, though carpeted extended load area, but it does provide security latches inside the boot, to protect access to its contents from the interior.

The cheapest in the range, our 1.8LX is remarkably well equipped. With four electric windows, six airbags, an alarm with remote locking, anti-lock brakes and air conditioning all included, who needs more.

In the back, there's neither roof lamp nor centre armrest, but up front, only those who find the standard electrically heated windscreen visually off-putting or wish they had a cassette player rather than a CD player, can complain – of having too much.

With familiarity, the heater's not beyond criticism; you can't stratify cooler air to the face vents, delivery is a bit feeble and the temperature dial is slow to respond. We

also disapprove of the way the air conditioning comes on automatically when the direction control is set to "screen".

Under the new Mondeo's bonnet are brand new engines, as well. After expressing disappointment with the two-litre petrol version's motorway noisiness, and recounting the diesel's remarkably muted note (see R0059), this 1.8 proved to be somewhere in the middle; we still curtailed ourselves to below 70mph, however, to enjoy the mechanical refinement that prevails up to that point. Despite this Mondeo's extra 10bhp, its figures show no improvement over its predecessor's, but it is a bigger car weighing 100kg more.

Remarkably, Ford has managed to improve the new Mondeo's handling prowess – you'll have to go to an Alfa 156 to better this Ford. Younger men in a rush or passengers prone to queasiness will find little to fault in its ride comfort, either, but the more discerning will note that its firm response to poor surfaces borders on the abrupt at times.

VERDICT

When a car test's criticisms major on the heater and standard items you might wish to do without, you can be sure that you're on to a winner! Not just the Mondeo in general, but this "basic" LX in particular, is an excellent choice for those looking for a complete family car at a popular price. Only the allure of the diesel would tempt us to pay more.

AT A GLANCE

considering size, price and rivals

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

SPECIFICATION

engine 1798cc, 4-cylinder, petrol; 125bhp at 6000rpm, 125 lb ft at 4500rpm; chain-driven twin overhead camshafts, 16 valves

transmission 5-speed manual, front-wheel drive; 22.1 mph/1000rpm in 5th, 17.3 in 4th

suspension front: independent damper/struts with integral coil springs, anti-roll bar.

Rear: Independent multi-link (two transverse/one trailing), coil springs, anti-roll bar

steering hydraulic power assistance; 2.8 turns lock-to-lock; 11.3m diameter turning circle between kerbs (15.8m for one turn of the wheel)

brakes ventilated discs front, solid discs rear, with vacuum servo and standard electronic anti-skid and brake force distribution controls

wheels/tyres 6½in steel with 205/55R16H tyres (Michelin Primacy on test car); full size spare

LIKES ...

chain-driven camshaft - no belt worries
syncho on reverse – easier manoeuvring
spectacles holder in roof
numerous intermittent wiper settings

... and GRIPES

tiny A/C tell-tale and no dial dimmer
heated screens' rockers can be confused
boot/tailgate release fiddly to work
o/s door mirror adjustment dangerously restricted for tall drivers

THE MONDEO RANGE

size/type upper medium (mid-priced)
5-door hatch, 4-door saloon, estate
trim levels LX, Zetec, Zetec S, Ghia, Ghia X

engines petrol: 4 cylinder/1.8 litre/125bhp; 4/2.0/145; V6/2.5/170 diesel: 4/2.0/115
drive front-wheel drive, 5-speed manual (4 speed automatic with torque converter on 2.0 petrol only)

OVERTAKING ABILITY ★★★★○					
<i>Free-revving and smooth response but a shade slower than last 1.8, despite the lower gearing that makes 70mph cruising noisier</i>					
acceleration in seconds	through gears*	④ th gear	⑤ th gear		
20-40mph	3.1	9.5	13.9		
30-50mph	3.9	9.2	13.3		
40-60mph	4.7	9.3	13.4		
50-70mph	5.9	9.7	14.1		
30-70mph	9.8	18.9	27.4		
max speed in each gear (*using 6400rpm for best acceleration)					
gear	①*	②*	③*	④*	⑤
speed (mph)	33	53	78½	111	126

SPACE AND PRACTICALITY ★★★★★	
<i>A big car that's not easy to park at the kerb, but rewards with massive rear space – where saloon has the edge. Turning circle not so good</i>	
<i>in centimetres (4-door saloon)</i>	inside († without sunroof)
outside	front - legroom 91-111
length 473	- headroom 77-104†
width - inc mirrors 193	rear - typical leg/ 108/84
- mirrors folded 181	kneeroom (107/82)
height 143	- headroom 91(92)
load sill height 17/72	- hiproom 133
(inside/outside) (18/74)	load space (all seats in use)
steering	(litres/cu ft) 500/17.6 (510/18.0)
turns lock-to-lock 2.8	load length 91.183 (95-171)
turning circle (metres) 11.3	full length to fascia No
easy to park/garage?	load width 113
★★★★○	load height (to shelf/ 48/NA
(where different, 5 door in brackets)	to top of aperture) (47/78)

CONTROLS AND DISPLAYS ★★★★○	
<i>Nice seat (with electric height control), easy radio controls, precise gears with light clutch. Heated screens both ends. Clear, quite accurate dials, but some warning lamps random and can be missed</i>	
	

SAFETY ★★★★○	
<i>No crash test results yet, but previous Mondeo fared reasonably. Generous array of airbags and belts standard. For accident avoidance and anti-theft measures, even basic version is impressive</i>	
braking	dry road stopping distance
pedal feel ★★★★○	from 50mph (with standard ABS)
in emergency ★★★★○	pedal load distance
handbrake ★★★○○○	10kg 36½m
	19kg 25m <i>best stop</i>
	+4kg ie 23kg 25½m <i>ABS on</i>

EURO NCAP CRASH TEST RATINGS
New Mondeo not yet tested

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

HANDLING AND STEERING ★★★★○	
<i>Latest version improves on previous Mondeo, which is praise indeed. Superb steering and poise with lots of grip and some semblance of road feel</i>	
	

COMFORT ★★★★○	
<i>Ride (especially damper control) has a sure touch, but underlying firmness can intrude over poor surfaces. Heater disappoints but air-con standard. Engine grows noisier just before legal limit</i>	

FUEL ECONOMY ★★★★○	
<i>Despite new engine, mpg similar to old model – which was 1-kg lighter; good on the motorway, though. Easy filler with good range and sensible timed low-level warning. Highest tax band for five door, however – by a whisker!</i>	
type of use (air conditioning off)	AA test (mpg)
urban (17mph average/heavy traffic)	24
suburban (27mph average/6.4 miles from cold start)	29
motorway (70mph cruising)	39
cross-country (brisk driving/20 miles from cold start)	36
rural (gentle driving/20 miles from cold start)	41
typical mpg overall	36½
realistic tank capacity/range	52 litres/415 miles
official mpg (urban/extra urban/combined)	25.3/49.1/36.4
CO ₂ emissions 185/187g/km (4/5dr)	car tax band C/D

HOW THE MONDEO SALOON COMPARES	engine cyl/l/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/(p) circle (m)	overall length (cm)
FORD MONDEO 1.8LX	4/1798/125	3170	9.8	27.4/18.9	36½	25/19*	111	108/84	2.8/11.3	473
Daewoo Leganza 2.0	4/1998/132	3240	9.4	22.6/16.1	30	26/40*	109	102/78	3.2/11.4	467
Vauxhall Vectra 1.8LS	4/1796/115	2940	11.1	28.6/20.8	38½	24/1.8*	111	101/73	3.0/10.9	450
Peugeot 406 2.0	4/1998/135	3210	10.5	27.2/17.6	32½	26½/18	113	98/75	3.1/11.2	460
Mazda 626 2.0	4/1991/115	2720	8.9	28.2/19.2	32	28/24*	111	101/75	3.0/10.9	448
Honda Accord 1.8	4/1850/136	3380	10.2	26.2/18.9	32	26½/15*	109	100/73	3.1/11.1	459
previous Mondeo 1.8LX (5dr)	4/1796/115	3030	9.3	26.2/17.0	36	28/17	110	102/76	3.0/10.35	456

* with ABS (p) all power-assisted