

Ford Mondeo

Featured model: 2.0 Zetec Estate



AT A GLANCE

considering size, price and rivals

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

SPECIFICATION

engine 1995cc, 4-cylinder petrol; 145bhp at 6000rpm, 140 lb ft at 4500rpm; chain-driven twin overhead camshafts, 16 valves

transmission 5-speed manual; front-wheel drive; 21.9mph/1000rpm in 5th, 17.2 in 4th (22.4/17.6 on optional 18in wheels)

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 standard anti-lock, brake force distribution and brake-assist controls

wheels/tyres 6½in x 16 alloy with 205/55R16 tyres and full-size spare; (optional 7½in x 18 10-spoke alloy with 225/40R18 92Y Continental Sport Contact 2 on test car, with temporary spare)

LIKES ...

30, 50, 70mph speedo markings
fine-sounding, easy-to-use audio set-up
roof-mounted sunglasses holder
lumbar adjusters on both front seats

and GRIPES

small, oddly shaped door mirrors
optional 18in wheels dent ride comfort
fixed rear cushion; sloping load deck
no cupholders/courtesy lamps in rear

THE NEW-STYLE MONDEO SOON restored Ford's family favourite to the head of the upper-medium class, comfortably surpassing the likes of the VW Passat and stylish-looking Laguna, thanks to its balanced blend of at-the-wheel appeal, fine build and spacious, well-crafted cabin.

Body style and power unit options were limited to begin with (albeit with plenty of trim levels on offer), but the Mondeo line-up was soon supplemented by the addition of an estate car, plus Ford's impressive 2.5-litre V6 flagship.

Of late, Ford has added even more safety features, including emergency brake assist, auto-relock and automatic reverse wash-wipe, which are all standard across the board. It has also introduced a new two-litre TDCi diesel – Ford's highly acclaimed second-generation common-rail turbo-diesel engine.

Occupying a modest 7cm more parking bay length than the saloon and five-door hatchback, this load-lugging Mondeo serves up the same dynamic delights as the rest of the range, but supplements them with a neat looking, spacious estate car treatment at the rear.

The estate largely mirrors the rest of the line-up in mechanical make-up and trim options. Apart from its wide, low-silled tailgate, it's further distinguished by integral roof rails and revised rear suspension (self-levelling on top models) that minimises load-bay intrusion. Inside, there are chrome tie-downs, a cargo net and a roller-blind cover for its load bay. It also sports a much-appreciated intermittent setting for the rear wash-wipe.

The two-litre Zetec proves agreeably brisker (if less muted on the motorway) than a 1.8 four-door we sampled previously, but again, the abiding impression is just what a fine, fluid drive the Mondeo delivers. Its roomy, quality-feel cabin with its finely honed controls and driveline deserve the credit, as do the taut, well-controlled chassis and quick, precise steering.

Optional 18in wheels, as fitted to our test car, undermine the Mondeo's firm yet superb ride to a degree, though, increasing fidgetiness over sharp-edged faults as well as introducing some "tramline" twitches over longitudinal ridges.

The large (if not quite class-beating) load space is a regular shape, neatly presented and easy to get at, yet it doesn't compromise superbly spacious back seat comfort, either. Apart from a lack of cup holders and courtesy lighting in the rear (and a centre armrest on the LX), the fixed one-piece cushion and resultant sloping extended load deck is the only other noteworthy gripe.

VERDICT

Restored to the head of the upper-medium sector, and by some margin, this estate further reinforces the Mondeo's rounded, quality-crafted superiority over its rivals. Its pace, economy and even load space are sound more than spectacular, but whichever body style you pick, the Mondeo's whole totals up to significantly more than the sum of its parts.

THE MONDEO RANGE

size and type upper-medium (mid-priced)
4-door saloon, 5-door hatch, 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 (TDDi), 4/2.0/130 (TDCi)

drive front-wheel drive, 5-speed manual (4-speed automatic on 2.0 petrol only)

OVERTAKING ABILITY ★ ★ ★ ○ ○					
<i>Tractable at low revs but lethargic below 4000rpm, so needs third gear for brisk overtaking. Free-revving and smooth (but more audible) beyond this, aided by taut driveline, slick shift and light clutch</i>					
acceleration in seconds	through gears*	③ rd gear	④ th gear	⑤ th gear	
20-40mph	2.7	5.5	9.3	14.3	
30-50mph	3.3	5.4	8.5	12.7	
40-60mph	4.3	5.3	8.5	12.4	
50-70mph	4.3	5.4	9.0	13.6	
30-70mph	8.6	10.8	17.5	26.3	
max speed in each gear (*using 6500rpm for best acceleration)					
gear	①*	②*	③*	④	⑤
speed (mph)	34	55	81	114	122

SPACE AND PRACTICALITY ★ ★ ★ ★ ○			
<i>Massive back seat space, plus a large, regular-shaped load bay behind. Radio controls' stalk is a handy feature, but sloping load deck, lack of rear cupholders/courtesy lamps and limited centre console storage disappoint</i>			
<i>in centimetres (5-door estate)</i>		<i>inside († without sunroof)</i>	
outside		front - legroom	91-111
length	480	- headroom	97-102†
width - inc mirrors	193	rear - typical leg/	108/
- mirrors folded	181	kneeroom	84
height (inc roof bars)	148	- headroom	99
load sill height	0/60	- hiproom	133
<i>(inside/outside)</i>		load space (all seats in use)	
steering		<i>(litres/cu ft)</i>	510/18.1
turns lock-to-lock	2.8	load length	98-201 ¹
turning circle (metres)	11.3	full length to fascia	No
easy to park/garage?		load width	114-142
	★ ★ ○ ○ ○	load height (to shelf/	46/
		to top of aperture)	76
¹ with back seats folded			

CONTROLS AND DISPLAYS ★ ★ ★ ★ ○
Clear, easy-to-read and accurate dials, excellent audio set-up and a fine, easily tailored driving position, with a precise, fluid feel to everything. Heated screens at both ends, but overstyled clock tricky to read



HOW THE MONDEO 2.0 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 MONDEO 2.0 16V ESTATE	4/1999/145	3120	8.6	26.3/17.5	33	24/16	111	108/84	2.8/11.3	480
Audi A4 2.0 Avant	4/1984/130	3170	9.9	25.4/16.9	34	25/18	112	97/70	2.9/10.8	455
Renault Laguna 1.8 Sport Tourer	4/1728/123	3370	11.2	26.1/19.0	37	25/12	110	97/71	3.2/10.9	470
Skoda Octavia 1.8T Estate	4/1781/150	3040	8.5	19.7/14.4	35½	24/27	112	97/69	3.1/10.5	451
VW Passat 1.8T Estate	4/1781/150	3060	8.4	20.8/15.0	34	26/14	110	101/74	2.8/11.0	470
Ford Mondeo 1.8 Estate*	4/1798/125	3170	9.8	27.4/18.9	36½	25/19	111	108/84	2.8/11.3	480

* performance/economy figures for 5-door hatch † all with ABS

SAFETY ★ ★ ★ ★ ○	
<i>Full set of safety and security features (including front, side and curtain airbags) earn Mondeo a worthy 4-star NCAP rating. Emergency brake assist (previously optional) is now standard</i>	
braking	dry road stopping distance
pedal feel ★ ★ ★ ○ ○	<i>from 50mph (with ABS/EBA)</i>
in emergency ★ ★ ★ ★ ○	pedal load
handbrake ★ ★ ○ ○ ○	unhurried 10kg 45m
	sudden 16kg 24m best stop
	+4kg ie 20kg 26m ABS on

EURO NCAP CRASH TEST RATINGS (1.8LX 5dr tested Nov 2001)	
front impact 56%	side impact 100%
overall 79% ★ ★ ★ ★ ☆	pedestrian rating ★ ★ ☆ ☆

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

HANDLING AND STEERING ★ ★ ★ ★ ○
Slick steering plus superb poise and control little diminished in Estate, but 18in wheels highlight firm set-up. Self-levelling on top models prevents tail-end sag when heavily laden



COMFORT ★ ★ ★ ○ ○
Comfortable cabin and fine suspension control keep underlying firmness at bay. Cruises quietly, but engine more intrusive at higher revs.

FUEL ECONOMY ★ ★ ★ ○ ○	
<i>Estate's bulk, solid build (and standard roof bars) peg economy back a bit, giving respectable rather than class-leading parsimony at the fuel pumps. Easy filler with fair range; trip computer only on top versions</i>	
AA test results (mpg)	official figures (mpg)
worst (hard/urban) 21½	urban 24.4
best (gentle/rural) 44	extra urban 45.6
overall mpg on test 33	combined 34.9
realistic tank capacity 52 litres	CO ₂ emissions 194g/km
typical range 380 miles	car tax band D