

Ford Mondeo



Mondeo GLX

MONDEO ISN'T JUST A NEW NAME OR a new face. For Ford, it really is a clean sheet of paper design, occupying the spot vacated by the Sierra. It's a front-wheel drive car (unlike the Sierra) because nowadays, this is the normal way of doing things – and it saves money in manufacture, too.

The new car also has entirely new engines, introduced in the last twelve months in certain Escorts; this gives a power range from 90 to 136ps, via 1.6, 1.8 and 2.0 litre 16-valve engines in saloon, five-door and estate car body guises. There's also a 1.8 turbo-diesel and a new 2½ litre 170ps V6 around the corner. Look out, too, for new electronically controlled automatic and four-wheel drive versions.

In fact, the Mondeo has more than a passing resemblance to the Toyota Carina and Nissan Primera,

that pair of UK-built oriental interlopers whose challenge Ford will have to fend off in the coming decade. Compared with them and the Peugeot 405, the Mondeo's mechanical specification springs no surprises, but it does have a high level of equipment that sets new standards. Even the entry version comes with power steering with a rake-adjustable wheel, as well as a driver's-side airbag and central locking, complete with an anti-theft alarm.

Tight shut-lines and flush fitting glass give the Mondeo an aura of quality, but the door mirrors don't fold flush with the bodywork and inside, the car's extremities are out of view – rear quarter vision is particularly obstructed. The driving position and cabin layout are excellent, with supportive seats and ideal adjustments to relate to the steering wheel and pedals. Some minor tell-tales are obscured by the wheel rim,

however, and we didn't like the ventilation that turned warm with the heater.

The new Zeta petrol engines are so complex that the full underbonnet layout is bristling with multi-point fuel injection and computer control; this signals the end of front garden maintenance for Fords.

The engines start instantly, however, and run flexibly, with smooth accelerator and clutch actions in traffic. The gears are cleaner-moving than the Escort's, but they prove obstructive on fast changes.

The biggest disappointment is in noise and vibration control. The problem is worst at a steady cruising speed and seems to produce toe-board tremors that subside when you accelerate harder. Driving at the UK legal limit isn't as subdued an experience as it should be. The 2.0 litre also uses shorter gearing than the other two (19.3mph per 1000rpm in top, compared with 21.8), which only adds to the fuss.

The car steers and handles well, with pleasant artificial weight and feel at the helm and poised cornering on smooth roads. Because the ride can feel a trifle flouncy and restive at times when the surface is

broken or undulating, we think that the Peugeot 405 and Nissan Primera have successfully beaten off the Ford quest for supremacy in this respect. Low-range Sierras also did better.

However, good all-round space and back seat comfort (even on the estate), with tasteful fittings and furnishings, make the Mondeo a real home from home. Ford has certainly created a handsome, well-equipped upper medium contender, and underlying the stylish looks are some valuable safety credentials. Anti-lock brakes are on the list, so is an anti-wheelspin feature (using the same wheel sensor components), as well as electronically governed adaptive spring damping. These features come as standard on top models. All Mondeos have automatic seatbelt tensioners, and in addition to the standard airbag, one for the front passenger will be available as an optional extra.

It's the cheapest version of the new Ford that impressed us most. The ride is at its best in a 1.6 basic or 1.8LX, and so is the just-adequate engine refinement. They are generously equipped and save a lot of additional outlay. The 2.0 litre, on the other hand, proved to be a flamboyant disappointment at the price.



Mondeo Si

THE MONDEO RANGE

				Lead-in	LX	GLX	Si	Ghia
				5 door	5 door	5 door	5 door	5 door
Hatchbacks								
	Engine	Power	Gearbox					
	1.6i	90ps	5 speed	X	X	X		
	1.8i	115ps	5 speed		X	X		
			Automatic		X			
	2.0i	136ps	5 speed			X	X	X
			Automatic			X		X
			4x4				X	
	1.8 turbo-diesel	88ps	5 speed	X	X	X		
Saloons				4 door	4 door	4 door	4 door	4 door
	1.6i	90ps	5 speed	X	X	X		
	1.8i	115ps	5 speed		X	X		
			Automatic		X			
	2.0i	136ps	5 speed			X	X	X
			Automatic			X		X
			4x4				X	
	1.8 turbo-diesel	88ps	5 speed	X	X	X		
Estates					5 door	5 door		5 door
	1.6i	90ps	5 speed		X	X		
	1.8i	115ps	5 speed		X	X		
			Automatic		X			
	2.0i	136ps	5 speed			X		X
			Automatic			X		X
			4x4					X
	1.8 turbo-diesel	88ps	5 speed		X	X		

OPTIONS	Lead-in	LX	GLX	Si	Ghia
Driver's airbag	S	S	S	S	S
Anti-lock brakes	O	O	O	S	S
Traction control + adaptive damping				O	O
Air conditioning			O	O	S
Rear wash/wipe (4 door only)				O	O
Remote locking					O
Quickclear windscreen		O	O	O	S
Leather trim*					O
Power driver's/ heated front seats					O
Speed control/trip computer					O
Power sunroof					O
Standard radio/cassette	2006	2006	2006	2006	2007
2007 + CD player (2040)		O	O	O	na
2008 + CD player (2040)					O
Audiophile system (not Estate)					O
* includes power driver's seat on Ghia					
S = standard					
O = optional					
Overall dimensions (4 and 5 door)					
Length	176 ¹ / ₂ in (Estate 182 ¹ / ₄ in)				
Width	68 ³ / ₄ in plus mirrors				
Height	54in (Estate 54 ³ / ₄ in)				