

Ford Escort 1.8 Turbo-diesel Ghia



FORD'S FOUR-CYLINDER DIESEL HAS BEEN around in various guises – normally aspirated and with a turbo – since 1984. This latest 88bhp turbocharged version (complete with intercooler) makes its debut in the Escort, although it's a serious option for the Mondeo as well. The old Sierra's 75bhp turbodiesel was a flop so far as fuel economy was concerned, and it sounded rough, too. On the other hand, the Fiesta's non-turboed version gives a respectable 55mpg overall and is arguably a better proposition than the slow 1.1 petrol alternative.

We were intrigued to discover, therefore, how this revamped version would juggle with the three vital elements of performance, economy and refinement.

To tackle the last aspect first, we should point out that our test car was a Ghia, which probably offers better insulation than the cheaper-trim variants that most diesel buyers are likely to be considering. Also, our recent experience with the Zeta petrol engine in both the Escort and the Mondeo, shows that engine in a much better light in the bigger car, so far as noise and

vibration control are concerned. The Mondeo diesel installation will probably be more impressive, too.

In fact, our Escort proved audible but free of facial tremors and things like that. Straightforward starting (with no cold start control) took just a couple of seconds or so of cranking. Free-play in the accelerator can cause unfamiliar drivers to stall as the car moves off, though, because the clutch bites before the engine has picked up. In fact, the play has been deliberately built in to avoid "shunt" in slow-moving traffic if the driver is a bit clumsy.

These are the sort of hiccups you "tune out" with familiarity, however, and both the clutch and gear-change feel lighter than you might expect, if you're used to a petrol Escort.

The car runs very quietly in the mid-range, and despite a highish top ratio, will accept a 35mph pull-away in that gear, or 28mph in fourth. This is a rather sudden turbocharger, however, with nothing but dolefulness below 2000rpm, but a boisterous build-up of acceleration thereafter. Our speed range times illustrate

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PERFORMANCE

Acceleration

time in seconds

STANDING START	0-30mph	0-60mph	1/4 mile
	3.7	11.7	18.6

mph	30	40	50	60	70
THROUGH THE GEARS		2.0	4.7	7.9	12.6
IN 5TH GEAR		8.9	14.2	19.0	24.6
IN 4TH GEAR		4.0	7.3	11.1	15.3

20 mph	30	40	50	60	70
5TH/4TH SPEED RANGES	20.8/10.4		10.1/7.1		10.4/8.0
		14.2/7.3			

Maximum speeds

REVS PER MINUTE	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
	1	2	3	4	5
	4625*	4625*	4625*	4325	408
	108	86	61	41	26

*for best acceleration

FUEL CONSUMPTION

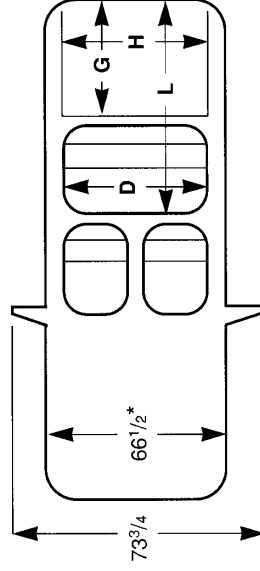
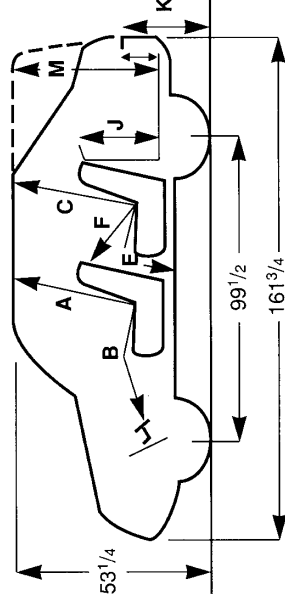
Fuel grade for tests: diesel

Normal range	mpg
Hard driving, heavy traffic	37
Short journeys in the suburbs	41 1/2
Motorway - 70mph cruising	46 1/2
Brisk driving, mixed roads	49
Gentle driving, rural roads	57 1/2
Typical mpg overall	48
Realistic tank range*	47 litres/500 miles

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

MEASUREMENTS

Dimensions (inches)



* with mirrors folded

Inside (inches)

Kerb weight in lb (full of fuel)

A Front headroom	G Load length	I Load floor width (min - max)	J Load height	K Sill height (inner/outer)	L Load length	M Load height (to tailgate hinge)
35-37	32 1/2-41 3/4	35 1/2	51 1/2	38 3/4	27	33 1/2
B Front legroom (min - max)	37-53	C Rear headroom	20	D Back seat width (between armrests)	8/27	56 1/2
37-53	20	E Typical rear * legroom	56 1/2	F Typical rear * kneeroom	33 1/2	

*"Typical" represents the mean measurement behind the driver's seat set at 39in legroom and the passenger's seat set at 41in

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Same as for Escort 1.6 16v (see report R9260) except for:

ENGINE

Type and size 82.5mm bore x 82.0mm stroke = 1753cc.

Cast iron block and head

Compression ratio 21.5:1

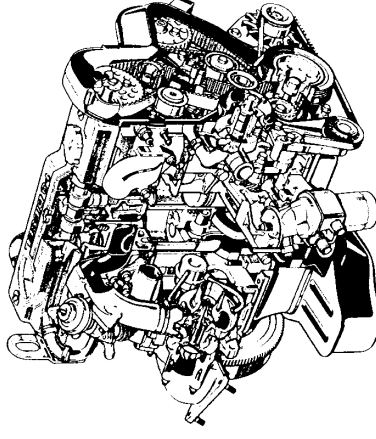
Valve gear single overhead camshaft (belt-driven) actuating two valves per cylinder via bucket tappets

Fuel system indirect injection diesel, with distributor-type mechanical injection pump, turbocharger with intercooler, two-way unregulated oxidation catalyser and exhaust gas recirculation. 55-litre (12.1-gallon) tank with low-level warning lamp on Ghia only. Fuel required: diesel

Ignition system compression ignition, with electric preheating for cold starts

Maximum power 88bhp at 4500rpm

Maximum torque 131 lb ft at 2000rpm



TRANSMISSION

Clutch pedal load/travel: 23 lb/5 3/4in

Gearbox ratios: first 3.42, second 2.14, third 1.45, fourth 1.03, top 0.77 and reverse 3.62:1

Final drive 3.56:1, to front wheels

Mph per 1000rpm 25.0 in top, 18.6 in 4th

Rpm at 70mph 2800 in top gear

this well, with a 40–60mph time in top which is under half that of the 20–40mph figure. At times, this translates into lethargic embarrassment on T-junction starts, but means that you need to use less of the loud pedal in the second half of an overtaking exercise, because the Escort gets the wind up its tail in a big way. By then, the noises off are becoming quite prominent, and before 70mph, the engine note when cruising also takes on a harsher edge. Perhaps this is why the speedo reads 10 per cent high!

So, it's a distinctly rapid performer if you know how to play the right tunes with the gear lever and tachometer, but how about economy? We're impressed by the improvement achieved over the Sierra – about 17 per cent by our reckoning. Our economy tests reveal the usual pattern of "better in town, worse if caned", that's typical of diesels, and our car showed up particularly well in the warm-up phase, which includes a cold start. Even really short-journey users should manage 40mpg if they go easy.

This time spent with a five-door Escort enabled us to confirm our comments about interior space and equipment, as given in our report R9260. We noted only small differences in back seat space and comfort between the estate car and hatchback – perhaps rear headroom in the estate is the most marked; this and its better load length are predictable, however.

On its 60-Series radials, our Ghia diesel seemed a shade more abrupt in its ride over bumpy roads, or perhaps it felt a comedown after the Mondeo we sampled recently. This and its handling are still respectable by lower medium car standards, but is fair enough good enough for you?

VERDICT

This Escort is a worthy attempt by Ford to offer 1.6 petrol performance with typical diesel economy, but it's a shade too sudden and a shade too raucous in the way it delivers to justify a Ghia image and price tag.



HOW THEY COMPARE	Engine cap/power (cc/bhp)	Max speed (mph)	30-70mph through gears (sec)	30-70mph in 5th/4th gears (sec)	Fuel economy (mpg)	Brakes best stop (%g/lb)	Maximum legroom – front (in)	Typical leg/kneeroom – rear (in)	Steering turns/circle (ft)	Overall length (in)
Ford Escort 1.8 Turbo-diesel Ghia	1753/88	108	12.6	24.6/15.3	48	103/75†	41 ³ / ₄	38 ³ / ₄ /27	3.0/34 (p)	161 ³ / ₄
Vauxhall Astra 1.7TD GLS	1686/82	100	14.6	31.7/21.0	50	97/37	42 ¹ / ₄	39 ¹ / ₂ /28	3.5/32 ¹ / ₂ (p)	159 ¹ / ₂
Renault 19RT 1.9 Turbo-diesel	1870/93	113	12.2	26.4/17.0	49	79/37	41	39/28 ¹ / ₂	3.5/34 ¹ / ₂ (p)	167 ³ / ₄
Rover 218SLD Turbo-diesel	1769/87	104	14.7	31.4/19.6	45	86/40	42 ¹ / ₂	38 ¹ / ₂ /27 ¹ / ₂	3.4/34 (p)	166 ¹ / ₂
Rover Maestro 2.0 Turbo-diesel	1994/81	102	13.6	40.8/24.0	54	97/48	40 ¹ / ₄	39 ¹ / ₂ /27	3.5/34 ¹ / ₂ (p)	157 ¹ / ₂
† ABS fitted									(p) power-assisted	