New Ford Focus (December 2014)

Published: December 23, 2014

Author: Tom Scanlan

Online version: https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/new-ford-focus-december-2014/

Tom Scanlan drives the new Ford Focus…

Ford Focus
Photo: James Lipman / jameslipman.com

Ford's new Focus includes the new Ford family front-end look and a re-designed interior.

New engines, including 1.5-litre diesel and 1.5 petrol are expected to deliver fuel efficiency improvements of up to fifteen per cent, along with lower emissions.

Ford says that the already excellent driving dynamics have been further improved with a stiffer front end, revised suspension and dampers, Electric Power Assisted Steering, and an industry-first Enhanced Transitional Stability system.

For the first half of 2014, one in three Focus models in Europe was sold with the 1.0 litre EcoBoost engine that this year was named the International Engine of the Year for an unprecedented third successive year.

The new Focus still includes a 99 g/km CO2 100PS 1.0-litre EcoBoost petrol engine variant.

Wheels-alive tried the Ecoboost 125PS (108g/km, £20 p.a.) version of the three-cylinder engine.

It turned out to be a very smooth unit, feeling at least as good as any other of the three-pot engines from other manufacturers. The car was also really quiet and Ford tells us that this is due to a range of subtle aerodynamic tweaks to the car's exterior, the addition of an under-body shield and with improved interior noise damping.

Performance was generally adequate, with the car only running a touch out of breath on long uphill motorway stretches. Here, a heavy foot or changing down a gear doubtless affected fuel consumption. Our mpg figure on a two-hour drive in a variety of traffic conditions was, according to the car's trip computer, only 38.7; this makes a mockery of the official combined figure of 60.1 mpg. It was also in spite of a variety of new technologies introduced by Ford to aid fuel efficiency and it should be added that our car was not driven hard. For the record, Ford says that, apart from start/stop, the Active Grille Shutter and Smart Regenerative Charging are amongst features that should enhance fuel consumption figures.

However, driving the car in itself was most enjoyable. The six-speed manual gearbox in our top-of-the-range Titanium X model was excellent, with a delightfully light feel and a clutch action that was as smooth as we've ever experienced. The electric steering was very precise and nicely-weighted. The handling gets equally high praise and the ride was very

comfortable.

The interior seemed to be nicely put-together and Ford's aim was to make the controls and buttons simpler and fewer. The main instrument needles in pale blue provided a nice visual touch. There's an improved glove-box and a hideaway for bottles or, indeed, valuables.

Ford Focus Photo: James Lipman / jameslipman.com

Ford Focus Photo: James Lipman / jameslipman.com

Space in the rear and in the boot is typical of the class.

The new Focus also will be offered with Ford's new fuel-efficient 1.5-litre EcoBoost petrol engine, available with 150PS and 182PS with a new six-speed automatic gearbox. When mated to the six-speed manual gearbox the engine will deliver a seven per cent fuel efficiency improvement compared with the outgoing 1.6-litre EcoBoost engine that offered equivalent power. In 2015 it also will be offered with a six-speed automatic transmission.

It will also be offered for the first time with Ford's 1.5-litre TDCi diesel, available with 95PS or 120PS, and a 10 per cent fuel efficiency improvement compared to the 1.6-litre engine it replaces. The 150PS 2.0-litre TDCi model with six-speed manual gearbox will deliver a 15 per cent improvement over the previous 140PS model.

Ford is well up in the car technology race: in fact, they claim an industry first with their Enhanced Transitional Stability programme; this can predict, they say, if a skid is about to occur from the speed of the vehicle and the driver's steering input and therefore, via the EPS, prevent it (within the limits of the laws of physics, of course).

There is also a host of parking aids available; the current Focus introduced Active Park Assist, the parallel parking aid that, at the push of a button, uses ultrasonic sensors to locate parking spaces and steer the vehicle while the driver controls the accelerator and brake. The addition of two new sensors to the rear of the new Focus enables Perpendicular Parking to operate hands-free in the same way.

The extra sensors also enable Ford to offer technologies that help drivers as they manoeuvre out of parking spaces: Cross Traffic Alert warns drivers reversing out of a parking space of vehicles that may soon be crossing behind them. It operates with radar at a range of up to forty metres and the system gives warning signals if it detects a vehicle approaching from either side; Park-Out Assist helps drivers as they exit a parallel parking space. After the driver has chosen either the left or right hand side the system operates the steering while the driver operates the accelerator and brake.

Ford also has improved its Active City Stop collision avoidance system that now operates for

the new Focus at speeds of up to 31mph, increased from 19mph.

Ford Focus
Photo: James Lipman / jameslipman.com

Further technology includes SYNC 2, the new version of Ford's connectivity system. Along with a split-screen new 8-inch Satnav touch screen, they say that the new voice command system could be used, for example, if you're feeling a bit peckish…just say 'I'm hungry' and you'll get a list of local restaurants that your satnav can guide you to. (We didn't test this as we weren't hungry!) Ford's 'MyKey' is introduced into the new Focus, enabling the car's owner to lend it out to, say, a teenage son, with outright performance and audio loudness muted down for safety.

Even the headlamps feature new technology, with seven different automatic settings

dictated by speed, distances, cornering, other road-users and more.

The new Focus comes as either a five-door hatchback or an estate with prices starting at £13,995 and topping out at £27,095 before options.

Our test car was priced at £22,295 and was fitted with around £1800 of extras, including a whopping (but industry-typical) £525 for the metallic black paint and £95 for the heated steering wheel…real luxury in this sector.

The new Focus is very good and sure to keep Ford ahead of its rivals in terms of numbers sold.

Ford Focus Photo: James Lipman / jameslipman.com

Ford Focus Photo: James Lipman / jameslipman.com

WHEELS-ALIVE TECH. SPEC. IN BRIEF

Ford Focus Titanium X 1.0T

Drivetrain: Front engine, front wheel drive
Engine: 998cc, 16 valve three cylinder direct injection
Power: 125 PS @ 6000 rpm
Torque: 170Nm @ 1,400 – 4,500 rpm
0–62 mph: 11.0 seconds
Top speed: 120 mph
Fuel consumption, ‘official’ figures:

‘Urban’: mpg 49.6 mpg

‘Extra urban’: mpg 68.9 mpg

‘Combined’: 60.1 mpg
Actual figure registered during our road test: 38.7 mpg over 75 miles.

PRICE (‘On The Road’): £22,295