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Road Test – Ford EcoSport Titanium 1.5 TDCi

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They simply cannot afford to not be represented in a model sector, particularly if it's a growing sector. So the remodelled Ford EcoSport MPV (or is it a compact SUV? – Ford advertises it as such) is based on the Fiesta platform and its arrival and subsequent recent updates were really a foregone conclusion – it had to happen.



Ford already make good workmanlike MPVs in the Galaxy or more sporting S-Max and it has the smaller B-Max and C-Max in its range but the “lifestyle” EcoSport offers the look and extra room of an MPV with the style of an SUV off-roader, but without the associated costs.

The MPV/SUV design on the Fiesta platform has created a boot space which rises from a nominal 333 litres (11.76 cu.ft) to 1,238 litres (43.72 cu.ft) and it weighs in at 1,745 kg (3,847 lb) with the bigger body. Eight models in the series are sold in two trim levels with petrol or diesel engines from 95 to 140 hp, with six-speed sequential automatic transmission or the five-speed manual I tested.

Extra cost options on the test car were panther black paint £495; rear privacy glass £225; rear parking sensors £210 and winter pack comprising heated front seats, door mirrors and windscreen at £230.

Our 95 hp turbodiesel is arguably the most popular choice with its 45 mpg economy on test, a reasonable return for everyday use, although it’s not particularly gutsy through the gears or quiet at any speed.



Realistic figures show it ambles along but that is maybe what most people want and it is roomy and comfortable for four/ five. Access is good to the cabin and boot and that has a good shape behind the rear lip.

Visibility is compromised to the back and the rear reversing sensors should be standard as a result, but they are not, which is disappointing. Side and forward vision is very good and the high riding position gives good sightlines in traffic or over field hedges, with big wipers and good lights for poorer conditions.

The powertrain was workmanlike, it felt solid but not quick, and steering responded well as did the footbrake with only modest pedal effort bringing about a quick stop. I found the handbrake travelled a long way and was not particularly effective on a steep slope we used



during this test.

Secondary switches were on fascia or steering spokes and had a good feel to their operation, with simple clear instruments ahead including a multi-function display. There is a single 12-volt socket to the offside back seat.

Air conditioning is standard and the system worked well throughout the car backed up by powered side windows, but no sunroof is available. Oddments room is good throughout for a family car and the side-hinged back door is easier to use than a conventional lift-up hatchback. There is no spare tyre, only an inflation-kit which is not ideal - because the recent re-style of the vehicle took away the spare wheel which previously had been mounted on the side-hinged tailgate.





Ford's EcoSport has a slightly firm ride, but it's not uncomfortable or bouncy, it doesn't roll around corners, wallow or pitch so it is less likely to produce travel sickness than some rivals.

Handling is very safe, undramatic, and it was agile in town thanks to the steering.

As stated, noise levels could be high on bad surfaces or when the engine was heading towards the upper rev-range, particularly in the intermediate gears. It was much more composed cruising on dual carriageways or motorways.

VERDICT

So the Ford EcoSport 1.5 diesel does not stand out in any way, but does a perfectly capable job in comfort, as needs must. So it fits the bill either as a compact MPV or perhaps more desirable if it's classed as a now popular must-have SUV – even if it only has 2WD.

For: Versatile, easy to drive, economical, roomy.

Against: Cheap-looking trim, small instruments, noisy ride, poor rear visibility, no spare wheel.



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Mini Milestones and Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

Ford EcoSport Titanium 1.5 TDCi, 5-speed manual. Price: £17,595 (as tested £18,755).

Engine/transmission: 1.5 litre, four cylinder turbodiesel, 95 hp, 5-speed manual gearbox, 2WD.

Performance:



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0-62 mph: 14-seconds.

Top speed: 99mph.

Fuel consumption: Combined MPG: 64.2 mpg (45 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 115 g/km, VED road tax £0/£30, BIK company car tax 23%.

Insurance Group: 9E.

Warranty: 3 years/ 60,000 miles.