Ford Focus Estate – Road Test

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Author:

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The latest Ford Focus Active X Estate test driven by Robin Roberts (and Miles Better News Agency).

If you are selling Britain’s most popular family car it is difficult to improve on it, unless you

offer an estate version like the Ford Focus Active X.

There has been a groundswell of sales lift towards MPV or SUV bodystyle across Europe but in Britain there is still strong demand for estates although some brands have given away sales to competitors by ending these highly practical, economical workhorses.

Wisely, Ford has decided to keep offering the Focus Estate series and it's not a token amount. The choice of Focus Estates run to 14 models in a 28 strong range which includes five-door models in seven trim levels from about £28,490 to £40,400.

The Active trim spec brings a 30 mm (just over an inch) higher ride height and what Ford term "rough road suspension" for mild leisure use, greater body protection, uprated instruments display, premium upholstery and boosted sound system, wireless charging in the Active X. In addition, for greater practicality there's a ski-hatch in the backseat rest and heated front seats and steering wheel, together with a low range 'crawler' gear in the seven speed automatic box.

Our £38,330 test car was fitted with £4,500 of options including blind spot detection, head-up display, intelligent high performance headlights, trailer coupling, parking pack, driver assist, hands-free tailgate.

When everything was added on, the price is not cheap, but it's a good bit less than the remaining premium brands and in reality the Focus gives little away to its rivals.



Don’t be fooled by the comparatively small 1.0-litre turbo petrol engine because this triple-pot pushes out with mild hybrid boost a useful 155 PS when necessary, and it never went below 46 mpg and sometimes edged over 49 mpg.



OK the engine note became a bit busy but the noise was not unpleasant until maximum revs were approached and the rumbling road sounds were, by contrast, ever present although still not intrusive.

The fact it is only front wheel drive may surprise some observers due to the chunky look of the car and this means it does not generate a lot of transmission noise and it helps the economy. What it lacks in an additional pair of wheels gripping it offsets with a low range setting in the transmission and a mode selection button ahead of the automatic's gearlever.

You can actually use both features to pull a 1,500 kg (3,307 lb) braked trailer over soft ground or a country track without it bogging down, so it's ideal for some country folk.

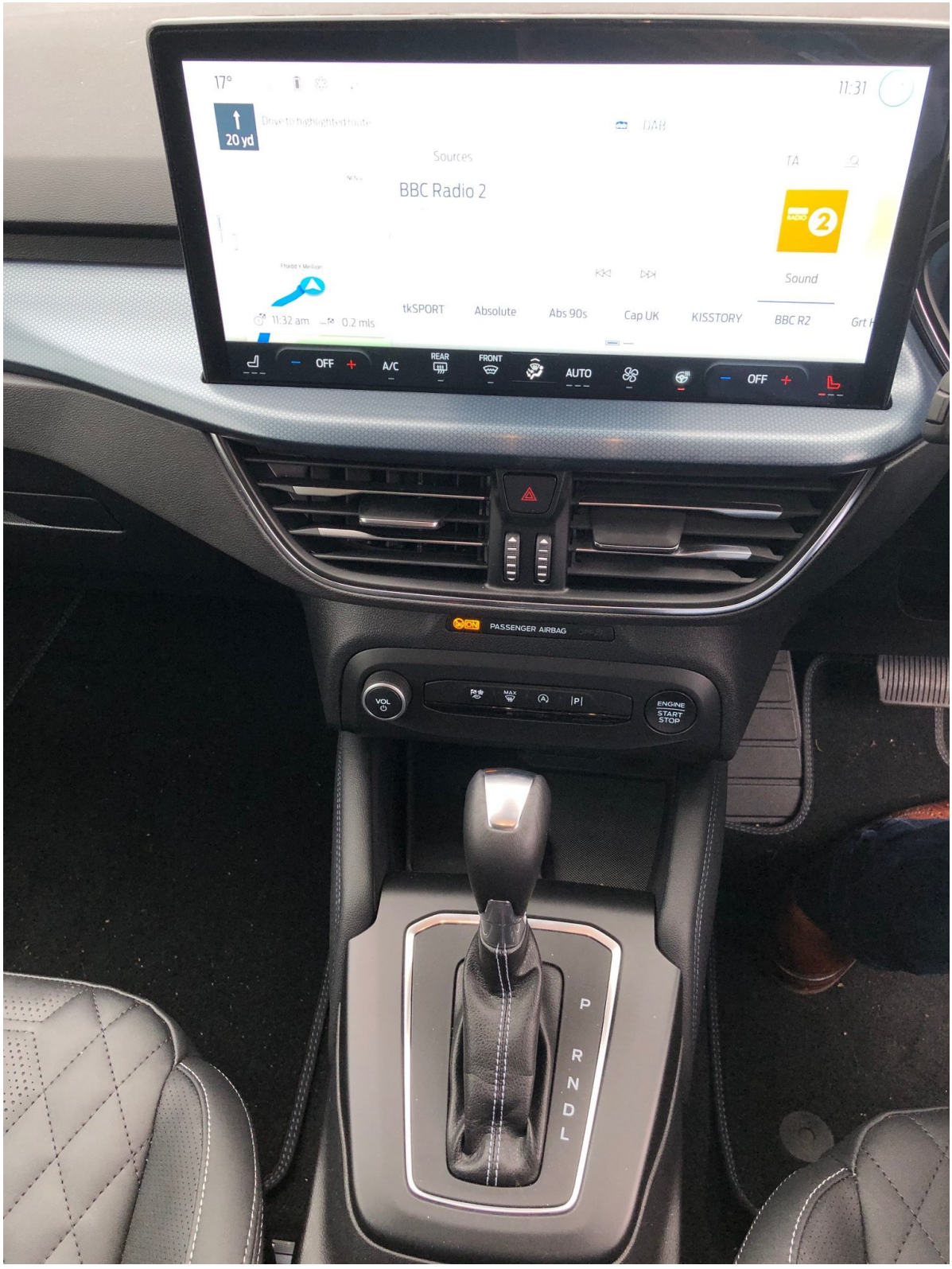
On open roads the performance is modest but useful, the engine responsive and the gearbox quick and quiet slipping through the ratios.

The current model is larger inside than the previous generation and it will take four or five adults in comfort with good headroom as well, or you can use the ski-hatch and 2/3 offset-split rear seats to mix and match to requirements.

Access was very good throughout and the remote opening and closing tailgate proved extremely useful with a flat, wide and long loadbed over some handy compartments and a space-saver spare wheel.

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For the driver the major controls were sensibly placed and the secondary switches logically set out, the big main instruments' display was very clear and quickly changed to show desired information but we found the infotainment display very fussy and sometimes not very logical although that was also highly legible.


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Heating and ventilation controls were simple, clear and worked well throughout the cabin, backed up by the four powered windows to balance heating, distribution and output.

Oddments room was reasonably good throughout with door bins and seat pockets in the back and trays and bin in the front on the central console.

Excellent vision came from multi adjustable driver’s seat, low waistline, deep and long side windows with slim roof pillars, powerful washers and wipers both ends and quick demisting when required.

It steered, stopped and held onto the road with confidence, had good responses and no vices to the handling while giving a good if slightly firm ride, but the excellent supporting seats were very comfortable and masked most bumps from the occupants.

Parking was effortless with a good turning circle, sensors both ends and a very good clear reversing camera display. I liked the simple and effective cruise control, gentle lane assist, together with the pedestrian and cyclist detection alerts.



VERDICT

The Ford Focus Active X Estate was highly specced with the additional equipment listed above but that was largely unobtrusive and it did not scream out at a user, rather the opposite as the interior did appear bland and with few highlights.

That maybe what an owner wants and if so the car will not disappoint, it certainly lives up to expectations and possibly exceeds them when it matters.

I sincerely hope that Ford keep a family friendly estate in their future ev plans even if the current Focus production ends in 2025. It would be a bad marketing and sales move if they do not.

For: Roomy and very practical, economical, comfortable with good seats and ride, distinctive mild SUV styling with higher ground clearance, good fuel economy potential.

Against: Modest performance, bland interior trim, expensive options, average warranty.



FAST FACTS

Model: Ford Focus Active X Estate

Price: £38,330 inc. options

Mechanical: 155 PS 1.0 litre three-cyl mild-hybrid turbo-petrol engine, 7 speed automatic, front wheel drive

Max Speed: 128 mph

0 – 6 2mph: 8.6 secs

Combined MPG: 46 on test

Insurance Group: 18

CO2 emissions: 128 g/km

Tax costs: Bik rating 30%, VED £200FY, £170SR

Warranty: 3 years/ 60,000 miles

Size: L 4.70 m (15.42 ft), W 1.85 m (6.07 ft), H 1.49 m (4.89 ft)

Bootspace: 575 to 1620 litres (20.31 to 57.21 cu.ft)

Kerbweight: 1,451 kg (3,199 lb)