Latest Ford Fiesta – First Impressions

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Looks familiar — but it's Ford's all-new Fiesta.

Reviewed by David Miles (Miles Better News Agency).

Britain's best-selling car for the last eight years, the Ford Fiesta, is being replaced by an all-new seventh generation range of three and five door hatchbacks priced from £12,715 to £21,225. The new range starting price is £1,080 less than the outgoing version but most models show a modest price increase, reflecting the higher levels of standard specification.

The Fiestas, dating back to 1976, have been hugely popular with 17 million global sales, 4.5

million of them in the UK market. One million of the outgoing model range has been sold in the UK since 2008. Last year 120,525 Fiestas were registered in the UK putting it again at the top of the UK top ten new car sales chart by a huge margin. The Vauxhall Corsa was in second place with just over 77,000 sales and the Ford Focus was third with 70,500 registrations.



Although the latest generation Ford Fiesta looks more or less the same everything is new or uprated although it still uses the highly rated Global B platform. The new Fiesta is 70 mm (2.87 in) longer and 13 mm (half an inch) wider, 20 mm (0.78 in) lower and the wheelbase

has been extended by 4 mm (0.16 in). All of these small increases add up to more interior space and a slightly larger 292 litre (10.31 cu.ft) boot, in line with the latest generation of new ‘supermini’ models such as the VW Polo, SEAT Ibiza, Nissan Micra and Renault Clio.

The new Fiestas currently have two chassis set-ups. Softer settings are used for the most popular Style, Zetec and Titanium spec levels plus the new highest specced Vignale and the sporty ST-Line gets uprated suspension settings. Further suspension changes will be made for the high performance ST model and the Fiesta Active crossover versions due next year.

The suspension is new but still MacPherson strut front with a new twist-beam rear axle and the front track is wider by 30 mm (1.18 in) and the rear by 10 mm (0.39 in). The outgoing mainstream versions of the Fiesta were famed for their class-leading compliant and comfortable ride, balanced handing, precise and predictable front end grip and overall agility. With the new settings and wider tracks the new Fiesta is even better in those areas.

As for engine choices there are Ford’s award winning EcoBoost 1.0 litre three cylinder turbo petrol engines with the option of 100, 125 or 140 hp power outputs. There is also the choice of a new naturally aspirated 1.1 litre three cylinder petrol units with 70 or 85 hp. For diesel customers there are the 1.5 litre turbodiesel engines with 85 and 120 hp outputs. The gearbox choices are five and six speed manual depending on the engine chosen, with an optional new six-speed torque converter automatic with the 100 hp EcoBoost petrol models.

At this week’s UK media launch Lisa Brankin, Marketing Director for Ford of Britain, said traditionally 70% of UK Fiesta sales are five-door versions, 91% of customers choose a petrol engine and 92% choose a manual gearbox with the new six-speed manual expected to be the most popular. Around 70% of registrations are to retail customers with a 50-50 split between males and female buyers. As for customer retention she said, “In the ‘supermini’ B-sector, the industry average is 40% but in the case of Fiesta we retain 50% of our customers”.



Lisa Brankin, Marketing Director for Ford of Britain.

Ms Brankin added, “We are expecting the new Fiesta range to achieve a growth in demand for higher specification models and currently 15% of our UK customers pay over £20k for their model of choice. We estimate 52.5% of Fiesta customers will choose the Zetec specification level, the ST-Line around 15%, Titanium 14.5%, Vignale 6.5% and Style 3.5%. Currently we have over 5,000 pre-sold orders and over 75,000 expressions of interest from potential early-adopters”.

The single best selling version in the new Fiesta range will be the Zetec 5-Door 1.0 litre EcoBoost 100 hp turbo petrol with Stop/Start and a six-speed manual gearbox, priced at £15,445

Now at its launch date the new Fiesta is available with Style, Zetec and Titanium specification levels plus Titanium X, B&O Play Zetec and B&O Play Titanium sub variants. ST-Line, ST-Line X and Vignale variants come on-stream in October followed by the ST sports version and Active crossover models in spring 2018.

Although the out-going Fiesta could happily hold its own in the exterior styling department with newer competitors, the interior was looking dated, of poorer quality and lacking in the fitment of the latest infotainment, communication, driving safety and convenience support systems.

The exterior styling is similar to the last generation and that's no bad thing. There is the familiar trapezoidal grille, swept-back headlight units and a rising waistline side profile over sculptured door panels. At the rear the horizontal light clusters, mounted in the tailgate and rear quarter panels, give the hatchback a classier look. The flared wheelarches covering the wider front and rear tracks give it a more sporting and purposeful appearance. The ST-Line models get a bodykit which includes a deeper front and bumpers, side skirts and a tailgate spoiler.

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Moving inside you see the most significant improvements and not just the extra space. Whereas the previous models had become dated in their appearance and quality with scattered controls, low resolution information screens and drab trim, the new models have a far more modern upmarket and sophisticated look and feel to them and if not class-leading they are at least on a par with the latest competition. There are still areas of hard plastic trim and the door pulls are not the most appealing in terms of looks and feel but they are no worse than other makes in this sector. The new 6.5 or 8.0-inch centrally-mounted high resolution colour tablet style touchscreens mounted proud of the fascia bring a more modern look to the interior as well.

There is a huge range of standard specifications levels and personalisation options available

and models from Zetec upwards get Ford Sync 3 software as standard. The £300 optional B&O Play 10-speaker enhances the sophistication on offer. Emergency Assistance and lane departure warning plus auto-headlights, Bluetooth and steering wheel controls are standard while options include cross-traffic alert at £475 and autonomous braking within the cruise control function costs between £200 and £500 depending on the model chosen.

The best selling Zetec spec level has as standard a 6.5-inch touchscreen, Android Auto/Apple CarPlay, 15-inch alloy wheels, daytime LED running lights, halogen projector headlights and front fog lights with cornering function, Quickclear heated screen, manual air-con, DAB radio, alarm, tyre pressure monitoring and tyre repair kit and trip computer. Worth adding as an option to the Zetec spec level is the £300 City Pack, which includes rear parking sensors, power folding heated door mirrors and puddle lights, and it's worth considering the £300 built-in sat-nav system. I would object to paying £175 for the electric rear windows for the five door Zetec model, these should be fitted as standard.

The list of add-ons seems endless but as always its worth selecting the extra items with care otherwise the price becomes unrealistic, and then it is worth considering upgrading the choice of specification to a Titanium version which, with the 1.0 litre EcoBoost 100 hp engine and five door body, costs £16,795 instead of £15,445 for the same engine, same body but with lower standard Zetec spec.



I opted to test drive the expected best selling Fiesta model – the 1.0 litre, three cylinder 100 hp EcoBoost turbo petrol model with its six-speed manual gearbox, five door body and the Zetec spec level which as I've already said costs £15,445.

The new model with this engine is as easy to drive as before but straightaway you notice a new refinement and calmness in its overall performance. The added sound insulation not only reduces engine noise significantly but road noise intrusion is much less. It feels throughout a much more grown-up and sophisticated small family car. The turbo engine is perky for response with the six speed ratios making the best use of the 170 Nm (125 lb.ft) of torque available from just 1,500 rpm. Top speed is 113 mph and the zero top 60 mph acceleration time is 10.5 seconds. The Combined Cycle fuel economy is 65.7 mpg and during our test driving around urban and traffic-busy rural roads our car returned 52.2 mpg. Also impressive is the low CO2 emission figure of 97 g/km which means VED First Year rate road tax costs £120 and then £140 for the Standard rate. Company car drivers will pay 18%

Benefit-in-Kind tax. Insurance is rated as Group 10 and the warranty is three-years/60,000 miles.

The Fiesta throughout its past generations has always been the benchmark car for ride comfort and handling in the ‘supermini’ sector. The wide tracks, new suspension, torque vectoring handling and well-weighted power steering enhance the driving pleasure. The ride is compliant, it’s comfortable for open road cruising speeds, nimble around town traffic and it hasn’t lost any of its past abilities to provide fun motoring when the mood takes you.

VERDICT

In almost every department; looks, spec, performance, price and running costs the ‘best’ just got a whole lot better and remains the benchmark ‘supermini’ by which competitors have to be judged.

For: Improved cabin design, roomier, higher specification, smart styling tweaks, low running costs, a winning formula of improvements throughout.

Against: Still too many areas of hard plastic interior trim, choose the extra cost options with care, in today’s competitive market paying extra for electric rear windows for the most popular Zetec five door model is not customer-friendly.



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

Ford Fiesta Zetec 5-Door, 1.0 litre EcoBoost Start/Stop, six speed manual. (Expected best selling model).

Price: £15,445.

Engine/transmission: 1.0 litre, three cylinder, turbocharged direct injection petrol, 100 hp, 170 Nm (125 lb.ft) of torque from 1,500 rpm, six speed manual.

Performance: 113 mph, 0–60 mph 10.5 seconds.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 65.7 mpg (52.2 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 97g/km, VED £120/£140, BiK company car tax 18%.

Insurance Group: 10.

Warranty: Three years/60,000 miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,040 mm (13.25 ft), W 1,735 mm (5.69 ft), H 1,476 mm (4.84 ft), boot 292 to 1,093 litres (10.31 to 38.60 cu.ft), five doors/five seats.