News – Ford’s Fiesta comes to the end of its production road

Published: October 28, 2022

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Online version: https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/news-fords-fiesta-comes-to-the-end-of-its-production-road/



A first generation Fiesta, from 1976. (Image from Ford archives).

The party’s over for the Ford Fiesta…

…writes Robin Roberts (WheelsWithinWales) in a special feature

looking back at the history of Ford’s ever-popular baby.

It’s the end of the road for the Ford Fiesta, the car maker announced this week.

The highly popular baby Ford created in the wake of the early 1970s oil crisis to get Britons moving again will roll off the Cologne, Germany productions line for the last time next June, after 45 years of sales.



A selection of Fiestas through the years. (Image from Ford archives).



Ford Fiesta 2022 brochure shot. (Image from Ford Archives).

The new Fiesta XR2.



Highly tuned but not highly strung.

The new Fiesta XR2 is a high performance car that doesn't have any tantrums. Performance? 1600cc engine. 0.60 in 9.3 secs. 105 mph.† 84 bhp. Reliability? Ford engineering sees to that. Comfort and style? There's plenty. Sports reclining seats. Stylish decal. Alloy road wheels. Ultra-low profile tyres. Sports suspension. Twin door mirrors. And much more. †Ford computed figures.

Ford gives you more. Ford

Ford Fiesta XR2 promotion in 1984. (Image from Ford archives).



Some 16 years ago… Celebrating 30 years of Ford's Fiesta, 1976 to 2006. (Image from Ford's archive).

However before the Fiesta finally bows out, the axe will also fall on the sibling Ford S-Max and Galaxy SUV and MPV models in April after time was called on their Mondeo stablemate earlier this year and the Ford Focus will follow in a few years.

Ford said it's all part of a corporate plan to move into purely electric vehicles throughout Europe by 2030 and the models' demise has been hastened by the markets' switch to Crossovers and compact SUVs which include the Puma and Kuga ranges, which will also become electric-only in future.

Restrictions on component parts over the last two years have forced all car makers to review their ranges and cut out models which make them the least money and push versions with the highest profit margins.

Electric cars are inherently more expensive to produce because of the materials they use but they are actually simpler to build with fewer parts and assembly workers so squeezing out less profitable models is a good way to trim the fat.

Ford has already announced plans to make its Valencia, Spain plant the electric motor hub for Europe and it's pulled out of Russia this week so it's slimming down it's manufacturing bases and saving money there, along with a cut of tens of thousands of supervisory and office jobs announced.

Ford was slow to embrace the new EV era for a variety of reasons and it has been overtaken by rivals such as the Volkswagen and Stellantis Groups who were able to spread their new technology investments over a wider number of badges.

The American HQ Ford business has also been struggling to get its EV models accepted in the United States due to the country's conservative buyers and the size of the country if you have to travel long distances with a recharging network not as plentiful as gas stations.

Europe is better sized to take on the challenge so long as Governments, energy companies and manufacturers step up to the job and intensify the investments in charging stations and hubs.

However, a new challenge is coming out of the sun at them, from China. It has a head start on the European traditional manufacturers with EVs and it is anticipated they will seriously undercut Ford and others on the vehicles' costs, making it harder to bring to market new European designed and built EVs.

Korean and Japanese brands are also well established in the electric sector and often the models of choice with their performance, pricing, style and reliability promoted by some

keen dealerships who consistently win awards for service.

More European manufacturers are moving away from traditional roadside dealerships to on-line sales and an agency arrangement. In this scenario the familiar showrooms are really just a front for a more extensive service after a buyer collects a new car already chosen and specified on-line over the manufacturer's website. Direct deliveries to homes and offices and even service collections will bypass the familiar dealerships.

Looking further ahead with vehicle prices climbing there is going to be a bigger move to leasing, being encouraged by manufacturers so they effectively retain ownership of their cars and can dictate both new and residual values. They will know when a model is due to reach the end of an agreement and it can be resold with a full history through the established network it has created.

Some manufacturers are considering refurbishing models at the end of lease agreements to give them a comprehensive warranty and dip into the lucrative second-hand market.

Buyers will have little if any room to negotiate prices but instead be forced to consider switching brands if they cannot get the deal they want and you can expect finance companies will be eager to lend money to get buyers on the ladder with the new brand of their choice.

Fiesta was the UK's best-selling new car for 12 years between 2009 and 2020.

In July 2014, Ford declared Fiesta to be the best-selling vehicle ever in the UK with over 4.1m registered since 1976 and that total has reached nearly five million.

There have been seven generations of the hatchback and a few facelifts and it has been campaigned in the World Rally Championship with a lot of success by Welshman Elfyn Evans and also been raced around legendary tracks for international series.

Until the Covid-19 pandemic, the Fiesta was routinely the best-selling car and topped monthly new car sales but recently it has only appeared twice in the monthly top 10 best-selling cars data, collated by the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders, just once in 2022.

In September, Ford shifted 4,570 Fiestas securing it sixth place in that month's best-sellers chart, while in March it finished 10th with 3,890 registrations, so the decline has been steady.

It was created at the end of one energy crisis and its demise comes as a new energy crisis unravels.

The Ford Fiesta was portrayed as the modern family car of the late 1970s, offering the latest styling and engine technology in a highly desirable package.



Fiesta S with optional alloy wheels, head restraints and radio at extra cost.

Ford's new baby

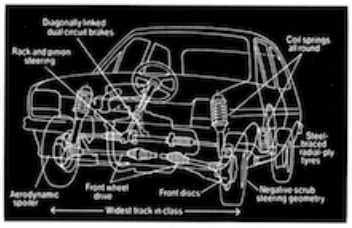
Never has so much advanced engineering gone into a small car

Advanced engineering should make a car work better without making it more complicated and expensive to maintain. The simpler a car is, the less it costs to own. That's the thinking behind the Ford Fiesta. It's a three door hatch-back with folding rear seats, a transverse engine and front wheel drive: in just one car it combines safe handling, ample space and remarkable economy.

Safe, decisive handling

The steering has a built in safety feature called Negative Scrub Geometry. It helps counteract a car's natural tendency to swerve under adverse braking conditions and helps you stop in a straight line in emergencies. So if a front tyre blows out, or if you have to make a violent stop on a wet road, the Fiesta is much easier to control.

The brakes are dual circuit with discs at the front. It's a *diagonally linked* system, so if one circuit should fail, you still have braking at both ends of the car.



Some of the Fiesta's safety features.

Cornering? The Fiesta has the widest track in its class, with coil springs all round and steel-braced radial ply tyres. The steering is rack and pinion, the simplest, most direct system. And a spoiler under the front bumper creates down-forces that increase stability, especially at speed. The gearbox lives up to Ford's reputation for light, quick and precise changes, a real achievement with a front wheel drive car. And there's a choice of engines: 950 cc (40 DIN bhp) which uses two star petrol for extra economy, 950 cc (45 DIN bhp) and 1100 cc (53 DIN bhp). Performance and economy figures are listed in the panel opposite.

The Fiesta is nippy in traffic and a decisive overtaker.

For a baby, it's pretty big

There is more legroom in the back of the Fiesta than in any comparable car, and that's where it matters most. It's only a matter of inches more, but it feels even bigger than it really is. And it's really light and airy inside. The glass area is no less than 25 sq. ft., and you have 309° of all round vision. Quite a safety feature.

With the back seats folded there is 42.6 cu. ft. of luggage space. There's even room for a chest of drawers in the back. And the back door, which is assisted by twin gas struts, opens to floor level. That means that you don't have to heave heavy cases over a high sill. Women drivers will appreciate this point when they're doing the weekly shopping.



The Fiesta has more legroom in the back than any comparable car.

Engine size (cc)	Max. Speed (mph)*	DIN Fuel Consumption (mpg)*
950 (40 DIN bhp)	80	41.5
950 (45 DIN bhp)	85	37.7
1100 (53 DIN bhp)	90	35.8

Maximum Prices as at 2nd February 1977. Seat belts, Car Tax and VAT included. Delivery and number plates at extra cost.

FIESTA PRICES	
FIESTA	from £1856
FIESTA L	from £2079
FIESTA S	from £2360
FIESTA GHIA	from £2657

*Ford computed figures.

For an advanced car, it's amazingly cheap to own

Fuel consumption figures using standard European procedure (DIN) are 35.8 mpg for the 1100 cc models. And the 950 cc 40 bhp models can do up to 41.5 mpg on two star petrol.*

We've reduced servicing costs with features like a self-adjusting clutch, self-adjusting brakes, maintenance free wheel bearings, and 'lubed for life' suspension and steering.

Since electrical systems are the biggest cause of breakdowns, we've reduced the number of connections to a minimum. For instance, there is a printed circuit instrument cluster. Lots of space under the bonnet makes everything very accessible. So if you do your own servicing, you can get at all the parts without skinning your knuckles.

The same attention to detail goes into the bodywork. First it's treated with phosphate which inhibits rust. Next the entire body is immersed in primer which is applied electrostatically. Then, after a second primer, it's given four coats of tough acrylic paint for a really durable finish.

To quote Autocar, "As a piece of Ford thoroughness the Fiesta is perhaps their most impressive car yet."

Some baby.



Incredible as it may seem this chest of drawers fits comfortably into the Fiesta's 42.6 cu. ft. of load space.

FORD FIESTA

Ford

Ford Fiesta 1977 wholepage advert. (Image from Ford archives).

DISCOVER WHAT ADVANCED ENGINEERING DOES FOR MOTORING

Test drive a Ford Fiesta today



Lower running costs
Advanced Ford engineering reduces service and maintenance costs to a minimum with features like self-adjusting clutch and brakes and lubricated for life steering, suspension and transmission. And the exterior panels can be divided into 40 separate areas to cut respraying costs.

The only way you can really appreciate the advanced engineering that has gone into the Ford Fiesta is to take one for a test drive.

It's Fiesta Time at your local Ford Dealer and he has a wide range of models he will be happy to show you. (If you're working all day, he will probably be able to arrange a test drive in the evening.)

After all, investment in a Ford Fiesta will prove far more lasting than the short term inducements that many manufacturers are trying to tempt you with.

GOVERNMENT FUEL CONSUMPTION TESTS- M.P.G. (litres per 100 kilometres)

Engine size (cc)	Town driving cycle **	Constant 56mph (90kph)	Constant 75mph (120kph)
950 (40 DIN bhp)*	35.8 (7.9)	50.4 (5.6)	34.4 (8.2)
950 (45 DIN bhp)	34.4 (8.2)	47.9 (5.9)	34.0 (8.3)
1100 (53 DIN bhp)	32.1 (8.8)	47.1 (6.0)	33.6 (8.4)
1300 (66 DIN bhp)	31.4 (9.0)	44.1 (6.4)	33.6 (8.4)

* 2 star petrol ** ECE15

PRICES

Fiesta - from **£2196.40**
Fiesta L - from **£2420.22**
Fiesta S - from **£2784.69**
Fiesta Ghia from **£3227.81**

Maximum prices as at 1st April 1978. Seat belts, car tax and VAT included. Delivery and number plates at extra cost.

Car illustrated: Ford Fiesta 1·1 S with optional alloy road wheels, push button radio and head restraints at extra cost.

FORD FIESTA Ford

Fiesta 1978 advert. (Image from Ford archives).

To emphasise the car's new role, in early 1976 Ford took the unusual step of flying motoring journalists and their partners or spouses to the South of France where the weather was better than a UK winter to evaluate the little three-door, blunt nosed model in a distinctive yellow launch colour.

They were given long routes to drive with a variety of roads including around Monte Carlo, over mountains and along the Mediterranean shoreline.

Couples were encouraged to swop drivers along the way to get as much feedback as possible, and this unintentionally included what was also believed to be the first crash test. Unlike today's crash test simulations in a dedicated centre, the Ford Fiesta launch involved a real on-road head on crash.

A journalist's wife left the lunch halt and promptly turned left into the path of an oncoming French driver who was simply going about his daily business, fortunately with comparatively minor injuries sustained by all involved.

The new Ford Fiesta launch was unforgettable and so too will be its demise.

Kim comments:

"The Ford Fiesta model will be remembered fondly by so many motorists (and their families) who have bought them in their thousands over the last 46 years.

In that time I have driven examples of every generation, each one technically improved/advanced compared with its predecessor.

However, from my perspective the sharp, clean styling lines of the original 'Mark 1' and its clever mechanical simplicity, mark it out as a favourite and an enduring classic design.

The photo below, taken in November 1978 by my late father Ron, shows me at the wheel of a first generation Fiesta ‘long-term’ test car on loan from Ford to the much-missed ‘Practical Motorist’ magazine, for which I worked at that time.”



Kim test drives a first generation Fiesta, in November 1978. (Image copyright Kim Henson).