The taller and wider Ford Fiesta Active – Road Test

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Going up in the world – The Ford Fiesta Active.

Tried and tested by David Miles (Miles Better News Agency)...

There is a global love affair with SUVs, 4x4s, off-roaders and crossovers, call them what you will and they come in all sizes and capabilities and at hugely varying costs.

But the demand has been so great that it has even spawned SUV styling to be added to affordable hatchbacks and expensive premium brand saloons/estates as manufacturers cash-in on the craze.

The newest of the pseudo-SUV arrivals is the Ford Fiesta Active five-door supermini sized hatchback. The Fiesta has been Britain's best selling cars for years and years. The Fiesta Active it is priced from £17,795 to £22,085 with three levels of specification Active 1, Active B&O Play and Active X depending on the engine chosen. These power units are 1.0 litre EcoBoost petrol 85, 100, 125 and 140 hp and 1.5 TDCi 85 and 120 hp turbodiesels. All have a six-speed manual gearbox but the 100 hp EcoBoost petrol has the option of an automatic transmission. All are front wheel drive.

Ford estimates around 15% of all new Fiesta UK sales will be for the new Active styled versions. Ford have also just added Active styled versions of their Ka+ small hatchback to their range and next year the Active spec will be added to the all-new Focus mid-sized hatchback and estate line-up.

The Fiesta Active should be a major seller in this emerging niche-within-a-niche new market sector and for its size there currently isn't much competition. Scratching my head I can only think of the Hyundai iX20 and The Dacia Sandero Stepway. On a similar theme and going up in size Skoda has their Scout versions of conventional models, Audi has their large A6 Allroad estate, Subaru with their Outback estate, Vauxhall their Insignia Cross Country estate and Volvo their V90 Cross Country estate. There could be more as it's a fast changing motoring world chasing sales – even in niche sectors.

But back to the Fiesta Active. Styling wise what sets this new model apart from other Fiesta versions is its raised ride height of 18 mm (0.71 in), which not only improves ground clearance if travelling off road on gravel tracks but also makes access easier for the less agile. The front and rear tracks are widened by 10 mm (0.39 in), which gives it a wider visual stance and offsets the increased ride height in terms of cornering stability. It gains roof rails, has protective plastic cladding around the wheelarches and lower front and rear bumpers, also 17-inch alloy wheels – and various Active badging completes the SUV-esque exterior look.



Inside it’s much the same as the conventional Fiesta hatchback models. A great driving position, good visibility, nice quality interior finishes and the top spec versions have an eight-inch touchscreen operating Ford’s latest SYNC 3 infotainment and connectivity functions as well as the sat-nav and sound systems, which are close to being the best in its sector. Where the five door Active misses out, just like conventional Fiesta hatchbacks, is with limited rear seat legroom, not as good as the latest and larger VW Polo and SEAT Ibiza hatchbacks and far away from the best in class Honda Jazz.





Specification wise, in addition to the styling and mechanical items already described, Active 1 level spec includes LED Night Signature rear lights, selectable drive modes of Eco, Normal and Slippery, front and rear electric windows, rear privacy glass and air-con. The Active B&O Play spec adds items such as uprated sound system, electrically heated and adjustable door mirrors, 4.2-inch instrument screen in front of the driver, traffic sign recognition, auto high beam headlights, cruise control, auto wipers and centre console with cup holders. The top Active X additions include power folding door mirrors with puddle lights, part leather upholstery, driver alert warning Ford SYNC 3 navigation, emergency assistance, Apple CarPlay and Android Auto connectivity keyless entry with push-button start and rear view camera and rear parking sensors. There are of course extra cost options available, including a £600 opening panorama glass sunroof, £100 door edge protectors, £200 Driver Assistance Pack (which includes pre-collision assist, pedestrian detection,

distance alert and adaptive cruise control), a £350 B&O sound system upgrade for Active 1 and Active X models, and £600 gets you full LED headlights.



My Ford Fiesta Active X test car was powered by the 1.0 litre, three-cylinder 140 hp turbo direct injection petrol engine which is a strong-performing and responsive unit with 180 Nm (133 lb.ft) of torque available across a very wide powerband ranging from 1,500 rpm up to 5,000 rpm. Mated with a slick six-speed manual gearbox it made light work of acceleration, high speed cruising or stop-start commuter traffic and it was just a joy to use and worth paying the £21,095 this version. Cruising at 70 mph was effortless and quiet apart from some road noise intrusion from the large wheels, and the zero to 62 mph acceleration time of 9.0 seconds was impressive – as was the engine response during mid-range acceleration.

Its real-life fuel economy was good as well, with 50.4 mpg recorded overall, which against the official Combined Cycle figure of 54.3 mpg is acceptable. The Eco driving mode didn't seem to improve fuel economy over a long run very much if at all, and dulled the acceleration response, and was perhaps best used on motorways once cruising speed had been reached.

With CO2 emissions of 119g/km First Year VED road tax is £165 before the Year Two standard rate of £140 is applied. Company car drivers will pay 24% Benefit-in-Kind tax and insurance is a low 10E group rating.

Despite the technical changes to the ride height and increased front and rear wheel tracks the Active still drives and handles as well as a standard Fiesta. The fitting of new hydraulically damped bump stops in the suspension minimised the shocks from all but the worst of potholes despite the large 17-inch wheels fitted with the relatively low profile tyres. The steering has a good weight to it providing accurate cornering yet still being light at low speeds in town and during parking. Despite it growing in height there appears to be no down-side to the Fiesta's renowned handling characteristics.



VERDICT

The new Active spec adds yet another powerful string to the Fiesta sales bow.

For: Pseudo-SUV styling brings an attractive and fashionable new element to the best-selling Fiesta’s already strong appeal, comfortable ride, good handling, strong-performing and responsive engine, good real-life fuel economy, relatively low running costs.

Against: As with all Fiesta models limited rear seat legroom, ungenerous warranty.



Milestones and Wheels-alive Tech Spec in Brief:

Ford Fiesta Active X, 1.0 petrol, 140 hp, manual, five door hatchback.

Price: £21,095 (£23,690 as tested with options).

Engine/transmission: 1.0 litre, three cylinder turbocharged direct injection petrol, 140 hp, 180 Nm (133 lb.ft) of torque from 1,500 rpm, six speed manual with three driving

modes. Performance: 125 mph, 0–62mph 9.0 seconds.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 54.3 mpg (50.4 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 119 g/km, VED road tax £165/£140, BiK company car tax 24E.

Insurance: Group 10E.

Warranty: Three years/60,000 miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,068 mm (13.35 ft), W 1,756 mm (5.76 ft), H 1,498 mm (4.91 ft), 152 mm (5.98 in)ground clearance, boot/load space 311 to 1,093 litres (10.98 to 38.60 cu.ft), braked towing weight 1,000 kg (2,205 lb), five doors/five seats.