



Ford Mondeo Estate

WhatCar? verdict



For:

Ford has done a brilliant job with the Mondeo estate. It's bigger, plusher, safer, better equipped and more refined and practical, yet it's lost none of the agility.

Against:

Heavy depreciation still threatens. The wagon doesn't hide its size as well as the hatchback version - in appearance or driving style. The V6 engine is costly to run.



On the road verdict

Performance



All engines perform well; the powerful TD shines. The Mondeo has petrol units of 1.8 and 2.0 litres, two 2.0 turbodiesels and a 2.5 V6. The petrol units feel a little laboured at low revs. The 128bhp diesel is beautifully driveable with consistent pull over a wide rev range. It now comes with an all-new six-speed manual gearbox.

Ride and handling



The Mondeo excels on all fronts. The Mondeo is certainly a big car but doesn't feel it because its body movements are so well controlled and its steering so alert. This highly capable estate also has a fantastically fluent ride - as long as you avoid the optional 17in wheels and low-profile tyres, which can make things too firm over potholes and ruts around town.

Refinement



No wind noise to spoil engine's sporting note. Wind noise, the uninvited guest at the hatch's party, is less noticeable in the estate. Road and suspension disturbance is minor and the engines have a muted but audible rasp that adds a semi-sporting timbre to the drive. The gearing of the 1.8 means engine noise is inescapable if you travel at slightly above the motorway speed limit, though.

In the cabin verdict

Behind the wheel



Less is more in the minimalist Mondeo. Ford has done a Volkswagen here, introducing an orderly, technological, feel. The mock-aluminium panelling of Zetec models suits it better than the wood trim featured in Ghias. There's huge space and adjustment of the steering column and seats (the chairs have electric motors to raise them), plenty of storage areas and a fine, logical layout.

Space and practicality



Wagon offers even more space on vast saloon. The Mondeo is a very roomy car, easily housing five adults, and the wagon eliminates the hatch's slight rear headroom problem. The load area is huge - long, wide, intrusion-free and easy to extend, though the loading lip is a little high. Strips set into the floor aid loading up, and there are chrome hooks to help you strap things down.

Ownership verdict

Buying



Avoid the V6 to keep the costs down. Company leasing rates are average but not the best because of the high depreciation that ensues when cars are sold in huge numbers, although wagons traditionally fare better than hatches. The impact on personal taxation for business under the new emissions-based structure will be mid-ranging, too. The V6 is best avoided on both counts.

Quality



Ford's best efforts are unlikely to let you down. The benchmark was the VW Passat and Ford has come close to matching it. The trim textures, panel fit and damped action of many of the Mondeo's features show Ford's determination to match the best. It's unlikely the trim rattles of the old car will be repeated with the new one. A three-year warranty promotes confidence in mechanical reliability, too.

Safety and security



Both safety and security exemplary. Six airbags, anti-lock brakes, anti-whiplash headrests, curtain 'bags and a pedal box which collapses in a crash helped the Mondeo achieve four out of five stars in Euro NCAP crash tests. Deadlocks are standard, but our attack testers were able to gain entry within two minutes as part of our Security Supertest 2002. However, they could not drive away.

Equipment



Lots of kit, but no luxury surprises. Ford supplies all the things you would expect, but only some of the luxuries which distinguish the best family saloons. All versions have air-conditioning, electric front windows and remote central locking. Most have alloy wheels.