



Ford Mondeo Wagon (1993 - 2007)

A new familiar face

Car review | When the Mondeo was first launched, Ford was the first manufacturer to overhaul its offering to the business market, with the others following in quick succession. As a consequence of being the first, it is also the oldest of a series, and the reason why Ford has decided it's time to give the Mondeo a facelift.

So Ford has updated and refined the appearance of the Mondeo, its equipment specification and the engine. The effect of these updates became clear when we drove the new diesel model with the latest spec.

Ford is keen to highlight the differences between the old and new model, so much so that they show a picture of each side-by-side. The differences are so subtle you need the pictures for them to become at all obvious. To make the car look more modern there is a new grill and the addition of lots of chrome. Also the bumpers are lower, the side protection strips less prominent and the door threshold is fatter.



Lorry

The visual impact of these changes depends upon the colour you choose. Darker coloured Mondeo's now look like someone has been over enthusiastic at the custom shop. However, lighter colours do indeed look more modern, and more chic than the previous model.

The Mondeo Wagon is much more than just a token, lifestyle estate-model vehicle. When you open the tailgate of this thoroughbred estate, it's so big it would give an agoraphobic nightmares.



Unfortunately the updates don't extend to such practical ergonomic features as a split tailgate or folding back seats. What is good though, is the suspension that adjusts automatically to compensate for the load. It's a feature that guarantees good road holding. The self-adjusting suspension meant the new lower bumpers had no problem clearing the speed bumps during our test drive.

And a bit more ...

This workhorse of a car is also very refined. It has all the luxuries that Ford could think of...and then some. Not only are the leather seats fully automatic and heated, Ford have taken it that extra step and included the ability to cool seats! This is a feature usually reserved for high-end luxury vehicles where it works faster and more efficiently than on the Mondeo. Another downside is the headrests. They just don't adjust far enough to offer genuine safety.

The Mondeo goes further than most in integrating mobile communications. Bluetooth technology in the dashboard means the driver can safely control the car, while making a call from the phone that's still in his pocket. You can also store your mobile's address book in the on-board computer, so you'll never have to worry about switching SIM cards or carrying cables.

Finally the Mondeo takes things a step further when it comes to controlling the music centre and Sat-Nav. Both can be operated manually or via speech recognition. The CD player will play original music CD's and is smart enough to play most of the formats used for home recording, including MP3 files from a CD-RW.

Diesel

The last part of the facelift is the new Diesel engine. The 2.2 liter TDCi we tested develops 155 bhp and a huge 400 Nm torque. Also the turbo is powerful throughout its range. Where many turbo-diesel engines lack power when you first put your foot down, the Mondeo engine is strong from the word go. At slower speeds the engine revs much lower than competitors engines, which directly translates into less noise and better fuel economy.



When on the motorway this versatile engine gives great acceleration even from cruising speeds. If you are motoring along in the cars sixth gear and you ask the engine for more, there's still a big scoop of power there for taking.

Like all Fords, the Mondeo stands out from the crowd because of its excellent handling. At low speeds the car is very responsive and a pleasure to drive. And at speed the Mondeo will romance you with its superior grip. Bad road surfaces are no problem and sharp bends just offer an opportunity for more fun. If you push too hard into a big curve the car can get a little twitchy but even then there's lots of leeway built in. It's much more forgiving than other comparable cars,

which is why many Ford drivers remain faithful to the brand.



Conclusion

The Mondeo was definitely in need of some cosmetic surgery and specification upgrade. The looks have been spruced up with the new grill, bumpers and the unnecessary chrome. More important is the strong yet economical diesel engine. Now it's ready to take on any of its diesel engine competitors.

When it comes to the equipment spec the Mondeo goes further than the competition. It sets the standard for a car at the top of its class. And despite these refinements it's priced very competitively. As you would expect of a Ford, it has excellent road holding and the luggage space is truly massive. ■

