



Ford S-MAX (2006 - 2015)

Too hip for the kids

Car review | At the time, it seemed like a lot of nonsense about nothing: the first results of the S-MAX concept car during the Geneva Car Show. Moreover when the first official photos of the production model were released, the Ford didn't look as though it was much more than a really good looking people carrier with an even nicer sounding name. However after the first test drive Ford's newest MPV offering has a completely different feeling: the S-MAX is a unique find; unique in its type and a total joy to drive. Read on.

An MPV (multi purpose vehicle) which drives as an MPV. The driving seat is high and upright. The steering wheel is flat and when the MPV moves away, the driver almost feels like he's driving a little lorry.

The Ford S-MAX is a completely different experience, even though it is no small animal. In fact the S-MAX is even larger than giants such as the Citroen C8 and Renault Espace. The S-MAX is derived from the new Ford Galaxy, but is lower and a clearly more exciting model.



Front of the car

There is enormous room in the front of the car, but the S-MAX doesn't give off the immense roomy feeling that is typical of most MPVs. Nor is the feeling of space enhanced by placing the dashboard so openly, with all the switches so far apart that even the largest of drivers feels like a little child in a giant car. Instead the S-MAX is a particularly spacious and above very beautiful people carrier. The materials used are those of a luxury touring car, not those of a nursery on wheels. The silver coloured strips and central console with its airplane style hand brake make the car really stand out.

En masse, the car is equipped with all sorts of the usual luxuries and modernities. Every S-MAX has separate left and right air-conditioning, an automatic dimming rear view mirror, cruise control, a radio/CD player with iPod portal, as well as light and rain sensors. The audio system is controlled with two handy control islands on the steering wheel.



In spite of all the exterior showiness, the practical side has not been forgotten. The S-MAX has all the necessary boxes, compartments and cup-holders required in every MPV. The seats of the test car were finished in a nice combination of alcantara and leather and were wonderful. The optional "climate seats" provide not only heating but also cooling: a wonderful idea which is worth every penny on warm summer days.

In the rear

The rear seat is furnished just as beautifully and is made up of three individual seats. Each seat is on a rail and has an adjustable back. The space in this alternative rear seat area is spacious, but less than its competitors. The S-MAX is obviously about its functionality.

Optionally the S-MAX can be equipped with a second rear seat making a grand total of seven seats. Again the space is less than other such cars. In particular, the legroom on the furthest rear seat is minimal and restricts them to children's seats.

Behind the second rear seat there is a considerable loading space which is comparable with a large family car. Many competitive MPVs with seven seats have little or no luggage space. The S-MAX takes several large suitcases in any case. In the double floor, there is also an extra baggage compartment.



The "Ford Fold Flat System" makes it really easy to fold down the seats to make the luggage space even larger. The seats don't need to be expanded but with two easy movements can be laid flat. A massive flat and easily accessible loading floor is the result. For those that do not choose the second rear seat can have a moveable loading floor which makes loading and unloading more simple.



Driving

In spite of the forest of seats and the enormous supply of space, the S-MAX doesn't drive like a typical MPV. The S-MAX has a greater sense of a sturdy off-roader which thanks to its high seating position, dimensions and performance drive, gives the sensation of being the king of the road. A part of this mighty feeling is reinforced in the design; part is due

to its driving characteristics.

Ford has a reputation to maintain for road handling and even this large MPV knows how to differentiate itself from the masses. From the first turn, the driver has the feeling that the S-MAX is capable of a lot. That feeling is justified. The S-MAX barely inclines and feels good. If required, thundering around a roundabout or through a complicated interchange can be achieved in the style of a seven seater sports car!

When this monster does become unbalanced, it does require an awful lot of steermanship or a very wide emergency lane in order to get the S-MAX back on track. Unfortunately ESP is only an option. A set of very strong brakes is standard and are capable of bringing the S-MAX to a standstill even from sensational Autobahn speeds.

Turbo

This sensation is in the case of the test car thanks to a 2.5 litre four cylinder engine with turbo. The gears bite firmly and when the turbo jumps in during the gear change there can be some nasty leapfrogging.

The small parking mirrors and large blind corners mean that the S-MAX is difficult to survey. The optional parking aids are not an unnecessary luxury. To change lanes safely it is necessary to look expressly over one's shoulder. In short, the S-MAX is not a handy little city car.



When the S-MAX does have the space; the turbo

engine is a true joy. Once again the S-MAX does not feel like a people carrier. In spite of the wind sail and the weight the intermediate accelerations are impressive. The high position and good noise isolation ensure that S-MAX doesn't feel particularly quick. However when the accelerator is floored the S-MAX knows how to pull away leaving the rest of the traffic as no more than a small dot in the rear view mirror.

The clearly audible turbo whistle guarantees a thrilling impression but it is annoying in the long run. On the German Autobahn, speeds of 105 miles/hr are not a problem; with still enough left over to give a little bit more.

The sixth gear is a pure overdrive facility which uses a lower rpm over greater distances. The S-MAX behaves like a wonderful touring car.

Conclusion

With the S-MAX Ford has a unique car. The makers have really turned the concept of the family car completely head over heels, which has resulted in a very special product. The S-MAX is inside and out a design statement on wheels. The performances ensure for a pleasant beginning for every journey. The promising exterior comes true with the road handling of a normal car and the performance of a sports car.

Just like every other MPV, the S-MAX is spacious and practical. This MPV is however so cool that this is almost an aside. The Ford S-MAX is not a family van because of the children. The Ford S-MAX is a stylish spacious car that is allowed because it is different, bolshie and distinguished. ■



Specifications

Ford S-MAX (2006 - 2015) 2.5 20v Titanium

Size and weight

Length x width x height	477 x 188 x 166 cm
Wheelbase	285 cm
Kerb weight	1.681 kg
Trailer	750 kg
Trailer - braked	1.700 kg
Fuel capacity	70 l
Luggage space	285/2100 l
Tyre size	225/50R17

Engine and performance



Capacity	2522 cc
Cylinders / valves	5/4
Max power	220 PS @ 5000 rpm
Max torque	320 Nm @ 2100 rpm
Drive	front wheels
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	7.9 secs
Top speed	230 km/h
Average mileage	9.4 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	13.3 l / 100 km
Mileage extra urban	7.1 l / 100 km
CO2 emissions	224 gr / km

Price

Price	Â£ 21,995
Price base model	Â£ 16,995