



Ford Ka+

Plus or minus?

Review | Over the past few years the Ford Fiesta has grown bigger and more luxurious. By doing so, the car has grown along with its customers, who have enjoyed more comfort and more driving pleasure with every new generation. But those who are looking for a basic family car don't appreciate all that luxury. They just want a spacious and functional vehicle. That's why Ford now introduces the Ka+.

The Ford Ka+ started out in life as the "Ford Figo". The Figo is built in India, which is also its most important market. Because of its sophisticated technology the average Indian family cannot afford the current Fiesta. The Figo is based on the fifth generation of the Fiesta and has a much simpler disposition. That's why many families in developing countries can afford the Figo.

To Europe

And that started Ford thinking! A budget car might also appeal to Europeans who focus mainly on the price. Many Europeans also prioritise price and space while caring less about a high-class finish or the latest gadgetry.



Yet, the Ford Figo was too basic for the European market. It wouldn't even comply with European safety regulations. That's why the car was altered to suit European rules and regulations, still keeping the low price in mind. While Ford was at it, spec levels, sound insulation, underpinning (tyres, struts, engine mounts) and looks were also improved.

And Ford did a fine job! The cabin now features the

same high quality materials and build quality as other compact Fords. However, the Ka+ doesn't convince as a successor to the Ka, because its daring looks and cheeky character have been traded in for blandness and functionality. The name "Ka" has mainly been used because it is already well-known, so Ford can save a lot of budget on marketing. And that money can be used to keep the price of the Ka+ low.



The Ka+ may not be a (worthy) successor of the Ka, but as a simple derivative of the Fiesta the Ka+ convinces even more. Even the modern grille has been copied from the Fiesta, though minus the sharp looks.

Minus: ergonomics

The doors close with a solid thump, but that doesn't go for the boot lid. It sounds like a tin can and regularly bounces back after closing. This isn't apparent immediately and thus several drives started with a "door open" light blinking, after which the car had to be stopped to close the boot lid again.



Another weak point: the big A-pillars reduce visibility. In city traffic bicycles and pedestrians easily disappear behind the A-pillar. On busy roundabouts it's important to take extra time to look around the A-pillar to make absolutely sure the road is clear.

Plus: space

With the Ka+ it's all about space. The space in the front is good, which won't be a surprise. The space in the back is fine as well and that's worth mentioning. Even with two tall adults in the front, enough space remains in the rear for two more adults. Compared to similar cars from other brands the passengers in the Ka+ do sit more upright.

The boot space measures 272 litres, which is a little below average for a car in this segment. By folding the back seat the boot increased to 849 litres and that's a very good score.



The Ka+ features all the necessary creature comforts, no more and no less. For those who want it, items like air conditioning and even heated seats are on the option list. And even these options are less pricey than with other Ford models!

Satnav isn't on the option list. Instead, Ford offers a cradle that fixes a smartphone on top of the dashboard, so it can guide the driver to his or her destination.

Minus: the engine

The Ford Fiesta comes with a 1.0 litre three-cylinder engine which has received many awards. Autozine also praised this strong, lively yet frugal powertrain in several reviews.

No matter how good the "1.0 EcoBoost" is, its advanced technology comes at a price. That's why the Ka+ is fitted with a cheaper 1.2 litre engine without any turbos or other advanced facilities.



Compared to the modern engines from the Fiesta and rival models from other brands, the 85 PS Ka+ engine lacks both power and personality. Below 2,000 rpm there's hardly any torque. That wouldn't be a problem if the engine revs easily, but it takes so long for the engine to reach a decent speed that performance is always poor. Even when shifting down from the fifth to the fourth gear on the highway it still feels like the Ka+ always has to fight a headwind. When releasing the throttle, the Ka+ doesn't even idle as well as other cars.

And low performance doesn't mean low fuel consumption. The lack of an idle stop system means that fuel economy in urban areas is poor. A highly demanding route with city traffic and mountain roads cost 5.8 litres per 100 km (41 mpg). Only on a simple route without city traffic and at speeds below 80 km/h 4.3 litres per 100 km (55 mpg) could be achieved.

The good news is that the Ka+ is very quiet thanks to improved aerodynamics and extra sound insulation. The low noise levels are also due to the fact that the Ka+ has a four-cylinder engine, which has a more quiet run than the more popular three-cylinder engines.

Plus: handling

While Ford clearly economised on the engine, no concessions were made on handling. Excellent handling is what distinguishes a Ford from another brand, and this entry level model is no exception. That's why its handling is the biggest plus of the Ka+.

Like no other brand Ford can find the balance between comfort and handling. On poor road surfaces the Ka+ is comfortable. On the open road the Ka+ excels in great stability, which means hardly any steering corrections are necessary on long distances.

Just as easily the Ka+ corners quickly. While doing so the car communicates very well with the driver, who therefore automatically feels what the vehicle is capable of. That doesn't just result in it being fun to drive, but also in added safety.



Conclusion

Is it plus or minus for the Ford Ka+? To answer this, it is important to keep in mind that Ford has chosen a new direction with the Ka+. This is Ford's first budget model and while test-driving it became apparent how much Ford has spoiled its customers up to now.

Ford wanted to offer a fair priced, spacious family car. That means priorities differ from other models. However, Autozine would still have prioritised differently. Ford did everything it possibly could to give the Ka+ a great ride, but with a budget family car that's less of an issue. Also, this driving pleasure is affected by economising too much on the engine. On top of that, the simple engine makes the Ka+ cheap to buy, but certainly not to run.

On the other hand, the Ka+ is spacious and comfortable. That's why when it comes to functionality the Ka+ does convince. ■



Specifications

Ford Ka+ Zetec

Size and weight



Length x width x height	393 x 170 x 152 cm
Wheelbase	249 cm
Kerb weight	1.055 kg
Trailer	300 kg
Trailer - braked	300 kg
Fuel capacity	42 l
Luggage space	272/849 l
Tyre size	195/55R15

Engine and performance



Capacity	1196 cc
Cylinders / valves	4/4
Max power	85 PS @ 6300 rpm
Max torque	112 Nm @ 4000 rpm
Drive	front wheels
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	13.9 secs
Top speed	166 km/h
Average mileage	4.7 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	6.3 l / 100 km
Mileage extra urban	3.8 l / 100 km
CO2 emissions	110 gr / km

Price

Price	Â£ 10,215
Price base model	Â£ 8,995