

Ford hatches 5-door Fiesta

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We drove the 4-door Fiesta six months ago. "Ford has found another recipe for hotcakes," we noted. We were pleasantly surprised by a wide range of amenities we'd expect in a much more expensive car—keyless entry/start, heated seats, leather, perimeter alarm, comfort package and more. The control layout was superb, and mood lighting gave it a combination night club/fighter jet feel. Though not powerful, it was peppy, holding its own quite adequately in aggressive metro traffic. Visibility was great. The audio system was a real rocker. We were also pleased with the Fiesta's spaciousness, and our main feature by Barbara Schaffer noted the hatchback holds even more. Time to find out.

The Fiesta 5-door Hatchback is actually 13.5 inches shorter than its 4-door sedan counterpart. That's a whopping 7.5 percent on a car this small (160.1 inches overall for the hatch, 173.6 for the 4-door). All the occupant dimensions are the same, with the exception of an extra 0.1" for rear seat headroom in the hatchback. Total passenger volume is the same for both: 85.1 cu.ft.

But the sedan's 12.8 cu.ft. of cargo volume ("luggage capacity")—which, again, we had found surprisingly large last summer—is trumped by a whopping 26 cu.ft. of cargo volume in the hatch from the front seat back, or 15.4 cu.ft. even with all seats up. Add liftgate convenience, and you have a compelling argument for a hatchback. Think again about 13.5 inches of short-bodied maneuverability and parking ease, and again the hatchback calls your name. On top of that, the hatch is 41 to 53 pounds lighter than the 4-door (depending on transmission: the automatic adds 38 pounds to the hatchback or 50 to the sedan). Our car this time, the 5-door hatch with manual transmission, weighs 2537 pounds, the lightest of the four possibilities.

We've heard so many times that Americans won't buy a hatchback. We're not so sure that's true, so we asked on Facebook, "Anybody here an ardent fan or detractor of the concept?" Answers included: [a] "Love hatchbacks. They just make sense." [b] "Hatchbacks sell like hotcakes in the mountains of Colorado, skis fit perfectly since they've become short and fat." [c] "I'm a big fan of 3 door hatches. All of Ford's new models I've encountered have a feeling of quality to them."

Powertrain, fuel mileage, pricing and options

Connected to a 1.6-liter TIVCT Duratec DOHC 120-hp gasoline inline-four, the automatic transmission brings you a Fiesta rated at 30 mpg city and 40 mpg highway. Going with the manual saves you \$1070 at purchase, though MPG drops to an estimated 29/38 city/highway. We'd go with the manual, as our test hatch was equipped.

Base price for the 5-door hatchback is \$15,120, compared to \$13,320 for the 4-door sedan, in SE trim (our test hatch was the base SE). Upgrade to the 5-door hatch SES, adding SIRIUS satellite radio, 16-inch premium wheels and Ford's SYNC® connectivity system, and you're at \$17,120 before options. Our Blue Flame Metallic test car—SE, manual—had a RapidSpec package added at \$1245, bringing SYNC, premium audio, sport appearance package, cruise control, front parking lamps and painted aluminum 15-inch wheels. Add ambient lighting and SIRIUS radio (\$370) and a winter package (\$195), and you're at \$16,930, or \$17,605 with \$675 destination charge—basically for an SES but with 15-inch wheels. Cleverly outfitted.

Our time with the 5-door Hatchback

In our week with the hatch, we noted that even with the manual transmission, it was predictably short on acceleration, but picks up pep on the power curve quickly. The manual transmission gave us an early up arrow. We were at 2000 rpm against a red-line of 6, and the car was telling us to shift up. Pff. We've found more useful torque at higher revs. The audio impressed us, as it had on the sedan—sounding as good as a \$5000 upgrade audio in a \$55k car, and it's all part of a \$15k car. If there's one single thing that makes this Fiesta look like a far more serious contender than its predecessors (the old Fiesta, even the Aspire), it would be these 15-inch wheels; go with the 16-inchers and it'll be all the moreso.

Our bottom line? Our logbook notes concluded, "Really, you could live with this car indefinitely; the only thing is that it could use a little more power. But it is what it is (and that's quite a bit!)." The longer we had this Fiesta, the more we liked it. Once you get used to the amount of power you do have, you can do quite a bit with it. You won't dust any Ferraris, but we surprised people all the time. It handles great, you get a lot of pep with the manual transmission, you can rip through corners at intersections and leave people wondering what the heck this new Ford's all about. ■

