

# Permanent European vacation

*Ford's frisky, frugal Fiesta...*

not to be confused with the new Ford Focus nor with the old Ford Fiesta

By Barbara Schaffer  
Photos by Joe Sage



After years of a philosophy that seemed to advocate bigger is better, Ford is going BIG into small cars for 2011 as it brings the Fiesta to the US market.

As a centerpiece of the Ford lineup in Europe for years, the newest version became the bestselling car in Europe for the first quarter of 2010. Now, Fiesta is ready to move into the US market this summer.

Fans of the European version will be happy to note that the US model is the same as the car sold in Europe, and that means it's going to be fun to drive, as I found out recently at the US introduction.

Small means the Ford Fiesta is about the same size as the Honda Fit and Toyota Yaris. It's available in two very stylish designs: a four-door sedan and a cool-looking five-door hatchback, both available in a multitude of vibrant colors including a Lime Squeeze Metallic that matches my cell phone perfectly. Interestingly, though the sedan is more than a foot longer than the hatchback, they have the same interior room and the hatchback has more cargo space.

The interior is exciting as the exterior, with sculpted surfaces, contrasting colors and a center stack patterned after the keypad on a mobile phone. With front bucket seats and a 60/40 split rear seat, Fiesta is a five-seater, but plan on putting only close friends in the back seat, because it will be tight for three adults. The cloth seat inserts are made from recycled materials and, in a way, the optional leather seats with contrasting color piping are recycled from cows.

A 120-hp 1.6-liter DOHC four-cylinder is under the hood, attached to a standard five-speed manual transmission. There is also a new six-speed double clutch automatic transmission as a \$1,070 option, that gets the same fuel economy as the manual.

The Fiesta's acceleration is strong, going from 0 to 60 mph in 8.7 seconds. With fuel economy at 30 mpg city and 40 mpg highway, the Fiesta is very comparable to the hybrids.

Engineers didn't pull a bunch of outdated equipment out of the old parts bin to build this lowest priced Ford. Fiesta is loaded with new things like a driver-side knee airbag, integrated blind spot mirrors, capless fuel filler, push-button start and ambient lighting, along with many other cool features. I especially like the SYNC communication and entertainment system and the four-inch multifunction display mounted in the top of the center stack.

For better driver control, Fiesta has a new Electric Power Assist Steering that includes a Pull-Drift Compensation system to keep the car on track in high wind conditions or when the road is not flat. It also has an Advance-Trac® electronic stability control system, the

## FORD SELECTS TWO ARIZONANS FOR FIESTA MOVEMENT

Two Valley residents were among the first to drive the Ford Fiesta as part of the Fiesta Movement Chapter 2, a social media initiative designed by Ford to create excitement and buzz around the compact car. Dubbed Fiesta Agents, Austin Baker, 28, of Mesa and Sunny Thaper, 26, of Phoenix formed one of 20 two-person teams selected out of more than 1,000 applicants nationwide to compete to win their own Fiestas.

Baker and Thaper completed a series of competitive missions over three months to leverage their communities, ranging from throwing a free concert featuring a popular local band to producing their own short film.

After completing each challenge, agents produced and placed creative content online at [www.fiestamovement.com](http://www.fiestamovement.com). Although they didn't win the Fiestas in the end, Team Phoenix did get to cruise around town in a Fiesta for a few months and even created a custom design for the car. Can't beat a free ride—especially one as fun as a Fiesta.



Arizona residents Austin Miles, left, and Sunny Thaper were among the first in the country to drive the new Ford Fiesta, as part of Fiesta Movement Chapter 2.

Photo courtesy Ford Motor Company

steering wheel has tilt and telescoping adjustments, and the automatic transmission has hill start assist.

The Fiesta sedan comes in three trim levels—S, SE and SEL—with prices ranging from \$13,995 for the S to \$16,995 for the SEL (including destination charge). The hatchback is available as a SE and SEL, with the SE priced at \$15,795 and the SEL at \$17,795. Ordering a loaded SEL hatchback with sunroof, leather and all the extras will run the price to around \$22,000.

The Ford Fiesta was a much better car and better value than I expected at this price point. It's very fun to drive, quiet and quite comfortable for a small car, and the styling is distinctive. I think it's going to be another big winner for Ford. ■



## FIESTA SEL LOGBOOK

- Keyless entry was our first surprise, very welcome, with an airport pickup and hands full. We put the suitcase in the trunk and there was our second surprise: it is REALLY big (and as Barbara notes, the hatchback holds even more). Third surprise: leather.
- We received a pre-release Fiesta, nicely equipped with a comfort upgrade package, heated seats, keyless entry/start, perimeter alarm and trim. Pricing was still t.b.d.
- Really nice control layout. Nifty blind spot mirrors in the corner of both side mirrors. Liking the setup. 101° on the readout; air is not automatic, so we have it on max, and turning the fan up, now we'll cool off.
- The seat forward-and-back is manual, surprisingly, with all the other tricks.
- We feel our front-drive nemesis straight away, a little torquey on steering, and that's while going straight, from the first red light.
- Has a light automatic shift, sometimes but not always with a little hesitation. The power curve seems to have a lack of torque or a weird shift pattern. We'd like to try the manual (even with its lower fuel economy).
- It holds its own once it's in traffic, though from a red light, it's a little short on power for the mean streets of Phoenix. A colleague inquired whether this car has grunt, because the Euro-spec Fiesta he drove at Dearborn didn't. This should be the same. Driving around, we're thinking grunt? No. But *pep*, it has plenty of pep.
- Over-the-shoulder 3/4 rear visibility inside is really good, lots of glass.
- Even in default settings on FM, this is one rockin' audio system... great sound, great pulse in the knees and seat. It may be the car your friends want to take when tunes matter.
- Cabin size is great, easy to enter. At 6'2", we start to duck but don't need to.
- Every time we get in, we wish we had a center armrest to lean on, and a console would be even better, though there are several cupholders and a decent glovebox.
- The center stack's night display at top is red, imparting a fighter jet feeling, with green icons to the left. The cupholders have purple lighting. Pretty sure this has a neat touch interface to rotate some colors.
- The diamond-shaped keypad is a little difficult to operate without looking... or with.
- Maybe it could use a few more horses, but it's peppy, and we wouldn't want to lose that magic "40" on the fuel mileage number. It could use a little bit larger wheels, mostly for style, but it handles okay. It has plenty of space inside, plenty more in the trunk, great audio, certainly has a great price.
- Ford has found another recipe for hotcakes—expect to see a lot of these on the road very soon. —Joe Sage