

Awareness

BY JOE SAGE

There are nine versions of Ford Fusion for 2019. Five have conventional powertrains, of which the top two models offer an emphasis on premium fitment (Titanium) or performance (V6 Sport). The other four are hybrids, in three of those five trim levels (eschewing the entry model and by default the sporty V6), with just the top Titanium model available in traditional hybrid form or Energi plug-in hybrid electric vehicle (PHEV) form.

Media evaluation fleets sometimes run ahead of retail availability toward year-end, sometimes not. The Fusion Hybrid driven here is a 2018 model (itself a carryover from 2017), one of four trim levels, of which the top premium trim is Platinum, while the Fusion Energi PHEV has had three trims, all but the base. Our sample is the non-PHEV top trim Platinum Hybrid—one step above Titanium in 2018, while for 2019 Titanium will be top dog. At this point on the calendar, you should be able to get your hands on either a 2018 or 2019 model.

We received this sedan in our cycle right after a pickup truck, going from a turbo diesel to a gasoline hybrid and from over 5000 pounds to not much over 3500. We were moving to a vehicle with roughly double the fuel mileage, while the change in vehicle power was—well, impossible to com-

pare. Ford states combined gas and electric horsepower, but torque for only the gasoline engine. The electric motor, though not stated, contributes 47 more horses total. Electric torque can kick in early, which helps with quickness. All in all, forget the numbers and just go put your foot on the pedal.

Coming straight from a high-torque diesel pickup was unfair to the Fusion Hybrid for its first mile, after which we enthusiastically noted its speed in general and its immediate power on tap. Easing into a two-lane freeway on-ramp, we immediately realized we could easily grab an open lane and conquer the competition. Nice.

We noted idiosyncrasies of the hybrid setup during our week—in outside temps over 100, we did not always get enough cool cabin air (though the fans were running strong); we wished for an auto start-stop defeat switch (presumably incompatible with the hybrid system, which cycles for its own reasons); and the car was harsh on speedbumps, perhaps due to battery weight and location.

We were aware of the car's hybrid nature in those small ways, but also in a big way, as its fuel gauge just never seemed to drop much, no matter how far we drove it, using just half a tank in a hard-driving, distance-devouring week.

For a spacious midsize sedan that does *not* go out of its way to virtue-signal its hybrid nature by style, the Ford Fusion Hybrid is a great solution. ■

SPECIFICATIONS (2018)

ENGINE	.....2.0L IVCAT Atkinson cycle I-4,
HP/TORQUE / gasoline engine	.....141 hp / 129 lb-ft
ELECTRIC MOTOR	...88kW perm-magnet AC-synchronous
HP/TORQUE / electric motor	.....<i>not stated</i>
COMBINED SYSTEM POWER	.....188 hp / <i>not stated</i>
BATTERYlithium-ion battery
TRANSelectronically controlled CVT
DRIVETRAINFWD
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SUSPENSIONF: indep short-long-arm w stblz bar R: indep multi-link
STEERINGelec power-assist
BRAKES	.....regen braking, 4-wheel disc, ABS
WHEELS	.....18-in alum painted pocket
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	.....191.8 in / 112.2 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	.....<i>not stated</i>
TURNING CIRCLE	.....<i>not stated</i>
SEATING	.....five
HEADROOM (F/R)	.....39.2 / 37.8 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	.....44.3 max / 38.3 in
CARGO CAPACITY	.....12.0 cu.ft
WEIGHT	.....3668 lb
FUEL CAPACITY	.....14.0 gal
FUEL ECONOMY	.....43/41/42 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE (2018).....\$37,275

INCLUDES (2018 PLATINUM):

Cruise control, dual-zone auto climate, capless fuel filler, power side mirrors w integrated blind spot mirrors, keyless start, rotary shift dial, SmartGauge® w EcoGuide, AM/FM stereo/single-CD player w MP3 and 9 speakers, two 12-volt powerpoints, SYNC 3 w 8" color LCD capacitive touchscreen (Titanium, Platinum trims) w AppLink, 911 Assist, two smart-charge USB ports.

RUBY RED TINTED CLEARCOAT	.....395
INFLATABLE REAR SEATBELTS	.....225
DESTINATION CHARGE	.....875

TOTAL (2018).....\$38,770

