

First drive

New Ford is more polished but lacks original's charm

The Ka for grown-ups

FORD KA

The original Ford Ka has been one of the most successful cars of the last few years, with nearly half a million sold in the UK alone. It's been the most popular city car for eight years.



This new version is more polished but lacks some of the original's rough-edged charm. It's been developed with small-car specialist Fiat, whose 500 shares the same basic platform.

The 1.2-litre petrol engine, too, is from Fiat and this is the first time you can buy a diesel Ka (1.3 TDCi). These give it much better claimed fuel economy and emissions.

The suspension is designed to make it feel more like a Ford. It handles confidently and drives more like the new Fiesta than the old Ka, so it feels more grown up, if

not as much fun to drive as before. It's wider and taller (but the same length), so there's more room for luggage and passengers. There are four specifications, from £7,995 to £10,195.

The first vehicles arrive in dealerships around now and will be officially on sale in January. A low-emission Ka Econetic is expected later in 2009.

The 1.2 petrol costs £700 less than the diesel, performs similarly and is only a bit less economical (55.4 vs 67.3mpg). You'll have to drive at least 60,000 miles to recoup the extra cost of the diesel.



Insignia replaces the popular, but not desirable, Vectra

Easier on the eye

VAUXHALL INSIGNIA

The sporty-looking Insignia is a more involving drive than the Vectra and impressively balances agility and comfort.

There is a hatchback and saloon that look nearly identical, and a Sports Tourer estate (pictured). There are also new engines, including a 2.0 turbo petrol (217bhp) and, next year, a 1.6 177bhp petrol. The top-spec 2.8 V6 turbo 4x4 with 256bhp



may not be popular thanks to top-rate £405 road tax and expensive company car tax. The 1.8 petrol with 138bhp is cheapest. There are three diesels with the same 2.0 engine: the 128, 158, and the 187bhp (in spring). The 157bhp diesel costs £250 more than the 128 but performs better. Fuel economy is claimed at

48.7mpg for both. For a family Vauxhall, there's little seat room in the back and while the boot holds 480 litres, folding the rear seats leaves a step in the floor.

VERDICT It can't beat the space or diesel engines of a Ford Mondeo, but looks, handling and value (it costs from £15,935) are good. The 1.6 petrol may be best.

This month

For our latest first drive reviews, visit www.which.co.uk/cars throughout the month. You can view video test drives  for several important new models, and read our full first impressions.

Renault Mégane

The all-new Mégane is a letdown in the looks



department – at least in five-door form. Renault has toned down the hatchback's looks, but has it improved the way it drives? Find out online.

Return of the MG

MG Rover may be a thing of the past, but new owners Nanjing Automotive have brought back the MG TF sports car (£16,395) as the first vehicle to roll out of Longbridge. We're test driving it this month – watch our video to see if it matches modern rivals.



Toyota iQ

City (small and frugal) cars are propping up new car sales, so the timing's perfect for the iQ. This tiny three- (or occasional, four-) seater has a quality feel. It's not cheap for a city car, starting at £9,495, but visit www.which.co.uk/cars to see whether small and costly can also be beautiful.



Satnavs and car clubs

Thinking of buying a satnav as a present or in the sales? Watch our 'how to buy a satnav' video to avoid common pitfalls. If your car is costing too much for the miles you drive, why not join a car club? Our video explains the pros and cons. Go to www.which.co.uk/advice/your-car to watch both.