



Sunday drive: Ford Focus Active X estate 2.0L EcoBlue

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Author: David Miles

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Ford has added a new member to its Active family, writes David Miles.



The Focus Active is available as a five door hatchback or estate and joins their Fiesta Active and Ka+ Active line-up. Ford Active models are termed crossovers models combining mild SUV styling whilst retaining the brand's strong driving dynamics.



Active specification includes raised ground clearance and driving position, roof bars and additional bodywork protective cladding. The Active models also have their own unique chassis tuning and steering knuckle geometry.

The latest Active family member joins the all-new Ford Focus family of hatchbacks and estates. It is differentiated by 30mm of extra ground clearance, front and rear skid plates, SUV inspired front end design with a dark mesh grille, Active branded door sill scuff plates, black wheelarch mouldings, selectable driving modes with additional Slippery and Trail modes and 17 or 18-inch alloy wheels with deeper walled tyres depending upon the spec level. There are Active and Active X with prices of £21,905 to £28,255 for the Focus Active hatchbacks and £23,005 to £29,355 for the Focus Active estates.

Adding an off-road style and sometimes 4WD traction to conventional family cars is of course not new. Skoda has its Scout models, Audi has its Allroads, Vauxhall has their Insignia Country Tourer estate, Volvo has Cross Country versions and Volkswagen has Alltrack models.

The Focus Active range, depending on spec level, comes with a choice of 1.0-litre EcoBoost 125hp and 1.5-litre EcoBoost 150hp petrol engines and 1.5-litre EcoBlue 120hp and 2.0-litre EcoBlue 150hp turbodiesel units. All engines can be chosen with either 6-speed manual or 8-speed automatic transmissions and all models are 2WD albeit with a traction control and ABS braking system which through the Slippery and Trail driving modes function can be give it some limited degree of added grip for gravel tracks, wet grass and of course winter road conditions. Other driving modes are Normal, Eco and Sport.

The characterful looking Active models have a mid range familiar Zetec level of specification but with additional items including 17-inch alloy wheels, cornering function LED front fog lights, twin exhaust tailpipes, rear privacy glass, additional selectable driving modes, keyless Ford Power Start button, SYNC 3 with voice control, a 4.2-inch TFT info cluster screen in the instrument binnacle and sat-nav. Front and rear parking sensor cost an extra £375 but are a worthwhile addition.



Active X added spec over Active are 18-inch wheels, panorama glass roof, body coloured electric folding door mirrors with puddle lights, front and rear parking sensors, auto wipers, partial leather trim, 6-way electric adjustable driver's seat, heated front seats and dual zone electronic air temperature control.

The Ford Focus Active X version I tried was the top of the range estate, most Focus estate UK sales will be for Active versions, powered by a 2.0-litre EcoBlue 150hp turbodiesel engine with the 8-speed auto gearbox and was priced at £29,355. The Active spec estate



version with the same engine/transmission costs £25,405. Both look good value for money against the current fashionable mid-sized SUVs, most of which are only bought with 2WD anyway.

The Active X estate is very similar to drive as any other new generation Focus be it hatchback or load-lugger models. The steering is very precise and well weighted with good feedback, the ride is compliant with the deeper walled tyres actually adding to ride comfort over poorer road surfaces without harming the handling, longer motorway runs proved to be relaxing and overall the handling, despite the taller suspension dampers and springs proved to be really well balanced just like any other new Focus model.

Inside with the added Active/Active X spec the Focus looks a really grown up well equipped estate car with lots of soft feel interior trim. It has well laid out controls and instruments, really quite classy and a nice place to be for either the retail or high mileage business driver.





My only personal niggle was with the rotary gear selector - I much prefer the conventional short gear shift lever and the other downside item was the fact that the start button is hidden behind



the rim of the steering wheel. Otherwise every other control came to hand nicely and thankfully heating and ventilation controls are separate from having to use the 8.0-inch touchscreen to operate them.

The latest Focus hatchback or estates whatever the spec level are roomy vehicles in their C-sector and we should not forget that the Focus is Ford's second highest selling model range after the Ford Fiesta and it is usually the third best selling new car range in the UK after the Ford Fiesta and VW Golf. There is no reason that the Active models should not bolster its appeal given the increased desire by new car buyers to own an SUV or crossover type of vehicle. I think the Active X treatment for the Focus estate in particular gives the car even better kerb appeal with the rugged styling additions giving it more character.



For the record every Focus model is a five seater with ample rear seat space for family use and the estate has a boot space of 728-litres increasing to 1,620-litre with the rear seat backs folded down.



By comparison the Focus hatchback offers 443 to 1,320-litres. So for family or business use in its sector the latest Focus really measure up to meet modern travel needs.

The Active/Active X treatment not only adds more hard-core crossover styling, the added ground clearance and extra poor driving condition traction modes add to its capabilities whether it's used for recreational family fun or business use such as vets, surveyors and such like. With its 2.0-litre diesel engine and automatic transmission it will also tow up to 1,600kg.

That brings me nicely to the engine and transmission performance of my Focus Active X estate. This latest EcoBlue specification unit produces 150hp but more importantly a healthy 370Nm of torque from 2,000rpm. This provides ample 'grunt working responsively with the 8-speed auto gearbox. The top gears are overdrive ratios which add to the estates fuss-free and low noise high speed cruising abilities. Country road driving with hills and



bends were dealt with easily and in-town stop-start driving was a doddle.



Now I know diesel power is not popular but the latest EU 6d TEMP compliant diesel engines should hold no fears for owners especially those who cover high mileage journeys. Officially this unit will return 51.4mpg in the new WLTP Combined Cycle and my week of test driving returned 50.1mpg.

If an all too common mid-sized SUV isn't for you try something different and if carrying space is 'a must' then the Ford Focus Active X estate car will fit the bill unless all-wheel



drive is a necessity.

MILESTONES: New Ford Focus Active X estate, 2.0L EcoBlue Start/Stop, 8-speed auto.
£29,355

Engine/transmission: 2.0-litre, 4-cylinder EcoBlue turbodiesel. 150hp, 370Nm of torque from 2,000rpm, 8-speed automatic with front wheel drive and on/off road driving modes

Performance 127mph, 0-62mph 9.3-seconds, WLTP Combined Cycle 51.4mpg (50.1mpg on test)

CO2 117g/km, VED diesel First Year rate road tax£210 then £145 Standard rate, BiK diesel rate company car tax 31%

Insurance group: 21E **Warranty:** 3-years/60,000-miles

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,693mm, W 1,844mm, H 1,532mm, boot/load space 728 to 1,620-litres, braked towing weight 1,600kg, 5-seats/5-doors.

For: Ideal as an alternative to the now too-commonplace mid-sized SUVs, characterful exterior styling, high quality interior, very well equipped, good value for money, comfortable ride, well balanced handling, strong engine, good fuel economy, selectable driving modes.

Against: No proper 4WD option, unjust higher diesel tax rates, fiddly rotary gear selector, hidden start/stop button, ungenerous warranty.