



## Weekend roadtest: Ford Focus Zetec S Estate

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Brits love their cars and Ford know how to fuel that affair.



Focus has consistently been in Britain's top ten and the UK love of the country life has driven sales of the estate versions, even when MPVs and SUVs seemed to be breaking into the market.

While the people movers are considered commuter and kids' carriers, the ever-popular estate hints at country living.

So when the latest Focus hatch arrived we naturally expected an estate and sure enough when the UK-specific Zetec S model showed up with a hatchback it was not long before it too was joined by its country-cousin. Active grille is part of eco features on latest Focus estate

Not many realize the Zetec S is a built-for-Britain version which gives the practical carryall



a performance facelift.

Based on the existing Zetec model, it adds a full sports styling kit including unique front and rear spoilers with lower sill extensions and 17in alloy wheels together with sports suspension featuring stiffened springs and dampers, aluminium-style sports pedals, rear LED tail lamps and Ford Power starter button.

Under the skin on the EcoBoost model tested is stop/ start technology, regenerative braking assistance and it even comes with an active grille to optimise air flow and give rapid warm up to aid economy.

The more powerful 180 engine joins a range of nearly 40 Focus estates and is available with automatic or as tested here, a 6sp manual gearbox. It's a really good combination.

The Welsh-built engine is an immediate starter, pulls eagerly and strongly without hesitation and delivers a broad spread of power with low levels of mechanical noise. It comes with a light clutch, very precise six-speed box and ratios which seem to have something for every situation.

The stop and start system is seamless and efficient and the overall economy despite some spirited cross country driving was surprisingly good.

I liked the very progressive yet powerful brakes underfoot, the handbrake held on steep slopes and the steering imparted a lot of feedback with a good turning circle and no vibration or twitchiness.



Secondary controls come to hand easily although some switches are hidden from the driver's direct line of sight, and the dials in front of the wheel are not calibrated in detail but are very clear and have a useful central panel to use for information to optimise the powertrain. Heating and ventilation works well throughout and you have standard powered front windows and £250 to pay

for an electric pair behind, but no sunroof is available. There is a good sound and info system as standard and it's Bluetooth compatible.

Access is very good with wide opening side doors and a tail which lifts from bumper height to give a nominal 476 litres rising as the seats individually fold down to a maximum 1502 litres. It's a good practical shape in the back and you can secure items and have some useful small compartments to stow odds and ends.

Ride quality with any estate is always more challenging for designers than a saloon or hatchback but the Ford team has done a very good job.

It is slightly firm but not at all uncomfortable, and it does do a good job at soaking up really bad bits of road, while it is smooth on main and motorway roads.



Handling has always been a strong point of Focus models over the years and the latest Zetec S does not let down the side, the front or the back but simply strongly grips and has a reassuring presence over any sort of surface. You know where it's going and it does what you think its going to do.



The body kit may actually help improve economy by reducing turbulence around and under the car and the active front grille certainly speeds up warm-up and promotes greater efficiency. The kit also looks very good.

In driving terms it also looks good when refuelling with an average of 35mpg on test. Using the on-board computer I was able to continually assess its performance relative to driving style and I never saw it dip below 32mpg and at times exceed 38mpg, so you have the potential to cover over 400 miles on a tankful.

## VERDICT

For the driver who needs space inside, but not necessarily outside, who values practicality but wants a performance look, then the Ford Focus Zetec S Estate with this 180ps petrol engine neatly fills the bill and it will not break your heart.

## Fast facts:

Ford Focus Zetec S Estate 1.6 180ps Man

Price: £21,800

Insurance group: 25T1

Mechanical: 4cyl 180 ps1.6 EcoBoost turbo-charged petrol, 6sp



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Performance: 138mph max., 7.9sec 0-62mph

Fuel consumption: 35mpg

Emissions:139gkm/VED band E

Warranty: 3yrs/ 60,000 miles