

# 2014 Ford Escape 2.0L 4WD Titanium

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Always one of the most popular compact crossovers on the market, the Ford Escape is also one of the most stylish thanks to a significant redesign last year.

So for 2014 there are only minor tweaks to the Escape, mostly involving new features and technologies.

Fuel efficiency continues to be Job One for Ford when it comes to the Escape. There is no longer a V6 engine, only a trio of four-bangers.

For 2014, the Escape is available with the choice of two EcoBoost turbo engines - a 1.6-litre inline four (178 hp on premium fuel or 173 hp on regular fuel, 184 lb/ft of torque) or a 2.0-litre inline four (240 hp with premium fuel, 231 with regular fuel, 280 lb/ft of torque). Lastly there is a 2.5-litre Duratec inline four-cylinder engine (168 hp, 170 lb/ft of torque).

The 2.5-litre is available only with front-wheel drive, while

the other two engines offer an optional Intelligent 4WD system in addition to FWD.

Based on the same platform as the Focus compact, the Escape is a versatile charmer that treats drivers to a more car-like ride than many other similar CUVs.

While compact in size, the Escape nevertheless has a highly functional interior with fold-flat 60/40 second-row seats, creating an impressive 1,920 litres (67.8 cu ft) of cargo space. Leaving the second row seats up, you are left with 961 litres of cargo space. And with the 2.0-litre engine and a Class II trailer hitch, the Escape will tow up to 1,587 kg (3,500 lb).

We tested a top-shelf Escape Titanium 4WD, dressed in an attractive Ruby Red tinted clear coat metallic, a \$400 option, with a grey leather interior.

Titanium is one of three trim levels, starting with the Escape S FWD. The upmarket SE and Titanium models can be purchased with FWD or 4WD.

Prices start at \$24,499 for the

Escape S with the 2.5-litre inline four, a six-speed SelectShift transmission, MyKey and a six-speaker AM/FM audio system with single disc CD player and MP-3 capability.

The SE (\$26,999 FWD and \$29,199 AWD) adds features like keyless entry with security code entry, voice-activated SYNC and MyFord Touch with 4.2-inch colour display screen. The Titanium (\$33,499 FWD and \$35,699 AWD) features a Sony audio system, leather-trimmed heated front bucket seats and a foot-activated liftgate.

Our tester had a number of optional features including the Titanium Technology Package (\$1,750) with HID automatic headlights, blind spot detection system and automatic parking system.

Other options were the expansive power panorama roof (\$1,750), Sirius satellite radio and navigation system (\$800), 19-inch alloy wheels (\$650) and the trailer-towing package (\$500). With all options, taxes and freight added in, the as-

tested price was \$43,014.

The five-passenger Escape is a major seller for Ford as Canadian dealers moved more than 45,000 units last year and just under 14,000 in the first four months of 2014. Not bad for a vehicle that has been around since 2001.

A complete redesign for the 2013 model year has paid dividends, with a vehicle that combines versatility, good looks and decent performance and handling ability. The Escape weighs 1,710 kg (3,769 lb), however it is surprisingly agile and easy to manoeuvre and park, even in a couple of tight spots I encountered during the weeklong test.

A feature called Torque Vectoring Control helps the Escape in hard cornering by transferring torque to the wheels with the most bite (i.e. outside wheels) to prevent understeer and forcing the front end to hug the curve. Another feature is Curve Control that slows the vehicle when it is entering a curve too quickly.

And although it wasn't need-

ed during my time with the Escape, the 4WD system adds a feeling of security as the system monitors traction and cornering conditions every 16 milliseconds and automatically adjusts power distribution where it's needed.

With the boxy old-style SUV-look replaced by a sleeker, more modern design the Escape handles as good as it looks, now in the class of the Mazda CX-5 that many auto scribes, including yours truly, have felt was the segment leader.

Inside, the Escape has the look and feel of a more upscale vehicle. The seats are firm, yet comfortable and well bolstered. There is nice use of chrome and metallic accents and soft-touch materials for a feeling of luxury in spite of a fair amount of hard plastic in the cabin. Overall fit and finish is good.

It's technology such as this, combined with the great new look that will keep the Escape at or near the top of the compact CUV sales charts for some time to come.



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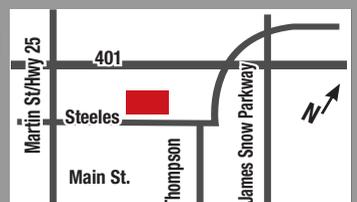
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