

The 2007 Ford Fusion comes with a choice of two engines— a 2.3-litre four-cylinder or (as pictured here) a 3.0-litre V6 making 221 hp @ 6250 rpm and 205 lb/ft of torque @ 4800 rpm.

Fusion additions complement package

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• And a new, available rear spoiler for the boy racer in all of us

These 2007 additions complement a well thought-out and well supplied base package of standard equipment and amenities offering ABS four-wheel disc braking, air conditioning, fog lamps, height-adjustable driver's seat, speed-sensitive wipers, remote keyless entry, power windows, power door locks and tilt/telescopic steering with audio and cruise control buttons.

The 2007 Ford Fusion comes in six different configurations based on two trim levels— base SE or upscale SEL, in front-wheel drive or all-wheel drive and with two powertrain choices, a 2.3-litre four-cylinder or 3.0-litre V6.

Both Duratec engines feature aluminum construction, dual-overhead cams, four valves per cylinder, intake variable-cam timing and electronic throttle control.

The 2.3-litre four-cylinder engine makes 160 hp @6250 rpm and 156 lb-ft of torque @ 4250 rpm. Fuel economy is rated at 10.1L/6.9L/100km (city/hwy). The four-banger comes with a standard 5-speed manual or, for \$1,200 more, an optional 5-speed automatic transaxle.

I've driven the 2.3-litre version before. It pulls with acceptable oomph, is priced about \$2,000 less than the V6 (or even better with the manual) and will save you a dollar and change in fuel every 100 kilometres.

But for more power and passing confidence, the 3.0-litre V-6 harnesses 221 hp @ 6250 rpm and 205 lb/ft of torque @ 4800 rpm. Power is translated through an advanced 6-speed automatic transaxle, one of the first in its class. Fuel economy is rated at 11.7L/7.7L/100km (city/hwy).

Yes, there is a difference in driving power with the V6, an engine that also allows for a match up with the Fusions latest dynamic option, an AWD system that was tuned with a performance emphasis complimenting the already capable platform shared with the Mazda6.

After the long winter, the last thing I would wish for was any amount of snow to prove it, but the AWD offers all-weather, all road condition security by continuously monitoring vehicle speed, throttle input and steering angle to deliver the right amount of torque to the appropriate wheel even before wheel slippage occurs. The AWD system has also been designed to eliminate torque steer and to help balance the vehicle through the corners.

This dynamic and performance ability melds nicely with a comfortable interior that feels quite roomy for a mid-size sedan. Ford has stressed rear seat room on several of their most recent models and they like to tell the story of how their engineers even tried on size 14 shoes to see if they could enter and exit the rear of the Fusion without brushing the B-pillar scuff plate or the back of the front seat.

The rear seat flops down with a standard 60/40 split and longer items can now stretch forward onto the fold-flat front seat back. In back, the trunk holds 447-litre (15.8-cu.ft) with a flat load floor, low liftover height and compact hinges that won't crush cargo or groceries.

And up front, the driver and passenger benefit from a cleanly designed dash and instrument panel with heritage traces from the award-winning F150 layout and bolstered by new options like the as-tested DVD Nav system.

We could go on about other elements of the Fusion, both the new additions and the standard design features but as a sum of its parts, the 2007 Fusion remains a bright spot of hope in Ford's car lineup, well stocked with enough features and amenities to make it a worthy and capable import interceptor.

And so far, the Fusion's future remains bright.

There is a rumour of a two-door coupe model in future that will probably depend on the car's continued sales success. And we will probably also see a hybrid version next year.

FORD FUSION 2007 AT A GLANCE

BODY STYLE: Four-Door Mid-size Sedan (SEL AWD as tested)

DRIVE METHOD: front-engine, FWD or AWD

ENGINE: 2.3-litre DOHC 16-valve inline 4-cylinder (160hp, 156lb-ft); 3.0-litre DOHC 24-valve V-6 (221hp, 205lb-ft)

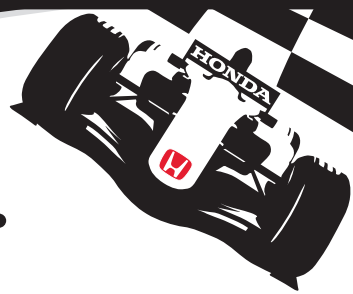
TRANSMISSION: Five-speed manual, five-speed auto, six-speed auto (V6)

FUEL ECONOMY: as tested 12.6L/8.2L/100km (city/hwy)

PRICE: 2007 Ford Fusion 2.3-litre I-4 SE FWD - \$23,499; 2007 Ford Fusion 3.0-litre V6 SE FWD - \$26,899; 2007 Ford Fusion 3.0-litre V6 SEL AWD - \$30,799 (as tested)

WEBSITE: ford.ca

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