

Designed principally for performance oriented drivers

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of torque with an overboost surge that will peak engine power for about 15 seconds of flat-out acceleration, running a sub-seven second 0-100 km/h acceleration time.

Those power ratings are based on premium octane testing but the good thing about Ford's EcoBoost lineup is that it will allow for regular octane gas fillups.

Stomp the go-pedal and all that get-up-and-go pushes your body into the seatback while your arms are busy trying to tame the torque-steer of power surging through the front-wheel drive.

There are no boost gauge dramatics inside the car but a Sound Symposer system (basically a pipe that carries induction noise to a sounding-board box inside the dash) adds an adrenal bump to the acceleration rush.

If you need any further proof that the ST was designed principally for performance-oriented drivers, the turbo engine is mated exclusively to a one-choice six-speed manual transmission.

If you're looking for an automatic option, 'm afraid you'll have to shop elsewhere.

The manual tranny's shift action is a tad notchy but nice, allowing for a quick and easy row through the cogs. With a tall top gear, engine revs will linger sedately near 2,400 rpm at legal highway speeds. There's still some available oomph left at that spin rate but a quick downshift into fourth gear allows a little extra hell to break loose if you have to blow past some slug.

If you're in a more conservative frame of mind, skip shifting into the taller gears around town easily limits the revs to a frugal 1,500 rpm mark, helping you towards the 7.8/5.6L/100km (city/hwy) rating. Which really isn't that far off the 7.4/5.2L/100km (city/hwy) fuel econ rating of regular Fiestas.

But what's the fun of that?

My fuel economy average over the course of 500 km worked out closer to 8.5L/100km (comb), a mixed bag of frugality and fun. And, with so much power on tap, and with the performance enhancements bought and paid for, it's all too easy to get caught up in the get-up-and-go spirit of this pocket-rocket performer.

The ST's dynamic performance add-ons include tweaks to the steering, braking and suspension systems. Low metallic compound performance discs help boost stopping power.

A unique ST suspension with modified front knuckle makes for a quicker overall steering ratio of 13.6:1 and an electronic Torque Vectoring Control system reduces understeer during hard cornering. The rear axle has also been stiffened for better overall stability.

The Fiesta ST body sits 15 mm lower than the base model and a three-mode electronic stability control with Standard, Sport or Off settings allows varying levels of electronic aid.

Inside the ST, Ford Canada elected for standard partial leather RECARO race seats (optional in the

U.S.) and other ST-specific features that include aluminum sport pedals covers, unique ST sill plates, a leather-wrapped shift knob, a leather-wrapped steering wheel with ST badge on the bottom and all the requisite electronic wizardry, bells and whistles that are in keeping with this upscale trim level.

There's room enough inside for tightly bolstered comfort up front and even tighter confines in a sparse second row. But that's okay because you wouldn't want your occasional passengers rattling around loosely in back as you squirt through the corners to a chorus of "oohs" and "ahhs".

And all this roller-coaster-like excitement has been packed into a handsomely stubby compact performance machine that sports a unique mesh grille, extended side rocker mouldings, a chin spoiler, black headlamp bezels and foglamps. In back, a new rear diffuser and fascia extensions are complemented by

bright tipped dual-exhaust pipes and a high-mount spoiler. And the ST stands on unique 17-inch wheels (or as winter tested here with 16-inch wheels mounting Pirelli Snow Control tires).

The ST comes in a varied palette that includes two optional Tri-Coat Metallic paint jobs (\$400) including an eye-searing ST-specific Molten Orange with orange seat accents and my as-tested Green Envy model with subtler black and grey RECAROs.

I think it would look perfect in blue with, say, a wide, white racing stripe (or the reverse). But, then again, the Green Envy was starting to grow on me.

"At least, it'll be easy to spot in the parking lot," the drive-through girl commiserated as I left.

True enough. But the thing is, even in this flashy shade of green, it might still be easy to lose sight of the 2014 Fiesta ST.

Especially if you're trying to keep up from behind.

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