

PRECIOUS METAL

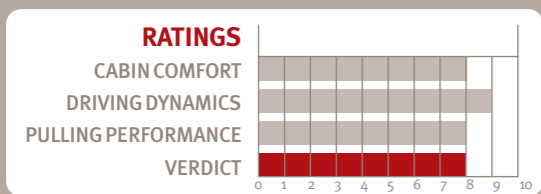


Instruments are clear and logical



Large, easily-accessible loadspace

“The Mondeo feels so satisfyingly controllable on twisty roads”



RRP	£28,945 OTR
Engine	1,999cc, in-line 4-cyl, turbocharged petrol. Transverse
Power	200bhp (149kW) @ 6,000rpm
Torque	221lb ft (300Nm) @ 1,750-4,500rpm (with 236lb ft [320Nm] overboost)
CO ₂	179g/km
Transmission	6-speed Powershift dual-clutch automatic, FWD
Fuel/tank/econ	Unleaded/15.4gal (70 litres)/33.4mpg solo/20.3mpg towing 1,350kg
Kerbweight	1,600kg (85% = 1,360kg)
Gross vehicle weight	2,300kg
Gross train weight	3,900kg
Noseweight limit	90kg
Towing equipment	Detachable ball £600 inc VAT
Spare wheel	Temporary use
Insurance	Group 26E
Mondeo Titanium Estate model-range	£21,095 (1.6T EcoBoost) to £29,045 (X Sport 2.0 TDCi Powershift)

Club insurance: 0800 028 4809 • Info: ford.co.uk

Clive White skims the surface in metallurgical studies and discovers that the Mondeo could be a caravanner's closest ally

ACCORDING TO internet sources, titanium was discovered in Cornwall by William Gregor in 1791 and subsequently named after the Greek mythological Titans by Martin Heinrich Klaproth. It's fascinating what you can learn on Wikipedia. Before perusing this learned encyclopaedia entry, in my ignorance I had perceived titanium to be a futuristic material used in the sort of shady stealth fighters and top-secret space craft in *The X-Files*.

Well it is, but titanium can also be found in just about everything from toothpaste to jewellery (especially handy for body piercings, apparently), and there might even be some in the magazine you're holding as it's used to whiten paper. As I said, fascinating.

More importantly, it crops up in this Ford Mondeo, though I must confess I'm not really sure where you'd find it, other than in writing on the car's badge.

CABIN COMFORT

Soon after this model gave such a good account of itself at the Club's Towcar of the Year contest, the 2011 Mondeo facelift was announced, identified by subtle styling revisions and newly available, advanced technology.

In essence our 2010 model is not very different. Ford says it has upgraded the trim materials for 2011, though I'm sure the finish in this version will satisfy most people. There are visual design and detail changes to the interior for aesthetic reasons and those dictated by the new equipment that's available, like the "ultimate" navigation system that Ford describes as "The crown jewel in the centre console...". Perhaps it's got some titanium in it?

Instruments and switchgear are logical and clear, though the attractively-presented information centre between the circular, analogue speedo and semi-circular tachometer can initially seem a little complicated. Once it's been used a few times, however, it all becomes clear and integrates well with other information displayed on the 'infotainment' screen atop the centre console.

The test car's Sport trim was smart in anthracite leather and alcantara, and given the sporty touch with contrasting red double stitching. Silver and gloss-black hard moulding inserts both lighten up the interior and add a touch of class, while the aluminium pedals provide a bit more sportiness down there in the footwell.

Front seats are comfortably shaped and while the supportive side-bolstering is noticeable, cushions are wide enough for it to not feel restrictive. The driver's seat electric adjustment and fully-adjustable steering ensure a good driving position for most.

As noted in previous Mondeo reports, it has become a large car over the years, but this benefits rear-seat passengers with ample legroom. The car's size also means a large, useful and easily-accessible loadspace.

DRIVING DYNAMICS

I make no apology for being enthusiastic about the Mondeo's dynamic qualities. Ever since we questioned Ford's wisdom in dropping the name Sierra (in the same way as we decried the death of Cortina), the first Mondeo impressed with its handling. It's improved model by model, always feeling as if it's just that little bit better than its competitors, whether they be front or rear driven.

Obviously suspension design, spring and damper rates and steering set-up all provide that happy cohesion to give Mondeo its confident adhesion. But, for me, the defining factor in Ford's success is the work that's been put in to make the steering feel so smooth and direct. The

weight, gearing and even feedback, so often absent in modern cars' steering, all combine to make the Mondeo feel so satisfyingly controllable on twisty roads – and you don't have to drive quickly to appreciate it, though it's even more involving when you do.

The Sport suspension on this car felt equally well judged, for the most part giving a compliant yet controlled ride. Of course it has a firmness and there comes a point where the Mondeo can become jiggly or will sidestep out of a mid-bend pothole, but it generally copes well.

While there's nothing wrong at all with diesel Mondeos, the lusty 200bhp EcoBoost petrol engine, in combination with the slick-shifting, six-speed, Powershift dual-clutch automatic, really exploits the car's dynamic qualities well. There's a linear responsiveness to the power delivery – not surprising with 221lb ft of torque on tap between 1,750-4,500rpm – which complements the handling capabilities with relish. If that's not enough, Ford has recently added a 240bhp version.

PULLING PERFORMANCE

The Mondeo disguises its towing alter ego well until the towbar is attached and the electrics socket folded down – all easily achieved, though you may need to get at

least one knee dirty to do so. Clamp-on towing mirrors were an easy fit.

Pulling away from rest can be brisk, but over enthusiasm could produce a touch of tyre scrabbling and steering tugging until traction control sorted things out. Nevertheless, 60mph arrived in 15.7sec and 30-50mph in manually-held 3rd gear in an impressive 6.7sec, while 40-60 took around 7.9sec in 3rd.

Left in 'D' the Powershift gearbox tended to prefer its cruising in 5th gear, though it was quite happy to motor along over 50mph in 6th when manually selected. Neither ratio revealed any significant fuel-consumption advantage, but 6th offered a very relaxed 60mph with the engine quietly spinning at 2,000rpm. Gearshifts were mostly smooth and at the right times, but just a little confusion crept in if accelerating from a near standstill when 1st gear could be snatched rather clumsily.

Not surprisingly, the Mondeo's inherent stability transfers to its trailer, the caravan maintaining good high-speed resistance to crosswinds and large passing vehicles. On twisty A and B roads the outfit flowed confidently through bends, while the responsive engine and gearbox combined their efforts well to deal with the hills to produce a competent, relaxing tow in all circumstances on the test route.

VERDICT

If you like your towcar to offer an involving, satisfying drive – solo and towing – maybe you should let Mondeo show you its mettle. Well, its Titanium, at least. ■



With thanks to Chichester Caravans, Redhill, for the loan of Towcar Test caravans. Call 01737 768266 or see chichester-caravans.co.uk