



The Un-Hybrid

The Ford Fusion Hybrid is in a class of its own

BY ERIC TEGLER

YEARS AGO, the makers of 7UP touted their product as the “uncola” to distinguish it from other soft drinks. Ford could trumpet its Fusion Hybrid as the “unhybrid.” The sedan looks like any other Fusion, save its subtly fused 2.5-liter gasoline engine, battery-electric drive, and continuously variable transmission. And delivering a smooth-riding 36 mpg on the highway, the Fusion Hybrid, like a cold glass of 7UP on a warm day, is refreshing.

The metallic silver Ford Fusion Hybrid that I test drove had already covered almost 14,000 miles, but it still felt tight as a drum. The build quality is first rate and the car did everything competently. Its hybrid character is evident when you turn the key and start solely on battery power — you glide out of your parking space in silence.

The digital/analog instrument cluster conveys hybrid cues, depending on how you configure it. For example, you can set it to display a digital graphic of green leaves, which grow as you drive more conservatively. However, I set it to display the battery level (which switches to engine rpm when the gas engine engages), water

THE SPECS

2010 Ford Fusion Hybrid

Price as Tested: \$29,500

Engine: 191-horsepower hybrid, 2.5-liter, inline four-cylinder/EV drive

Weight: 3,720 pounds

Fuel Economy: 41 city/
36 highway

SHADES OF GREEN

When considering a Ford Fusion Hybrid, one can't overlook its base-level, four-cylinder cousin, the Fusion S. The Fusion Hybrid starts at \$27,270 while the conventional model begins at \$19,695. The former averages approximately 36 mpg and the latter about 30, meaning the Fusion Hybrid delivers 20 percent better fuel economy than the Fusion S, though it also costs around 30 percent more. The cars drive similarly, but you can get a six-speed manual or automatic in your gas-powered Fusion S. (The Fusion Hybrid is available with automatic only.) As such, Ford presents you with a choice: pay less at purchase time or pay less at the pump.

— E.T.

INNOVATIONS

Tires That Grip and Save Money

Low-rolling-resistance tires increase fuel economy by reducing friction between the tires and the road. And with up to 15 percent of the gasoline consumed by a typical car attributable to rolling resistance, these tires can save money. The **Energy Saver A/S** is Michelin's most fuel-efficient all-season passenger car tire, developed to maximize fuel economy without sacrificing traction. michelinman.com/tire-selector



temperature, instantaneous and average mpg, and miles to empty. There's also a useful trip summary feature that displays distance, fuel used, and more when you shut the car off.

The switch from battery- to gasoline-powered mode is smooth and the handling as capable as any other Fusion, but the regenerative brakes are touchy. The interior has all the goodies of its Ford brethren, including the hands-free Sync multimedia/navigation system.

I'm not much of a hybrid fan, but what Ford has built here is a good sedan with a hybrid powertrain. As 7UP's iconic pitcher, Geoffrey Holder, would have said, "Simply marvelous."

WEB EXCLUSIVE



Want to see more?

Check out the 2010 Ford Fusion Hybrid from multiple angles in our virtual showroom tour. Visit continental.com/magazine.



Comparison Shopping

With gas prices likely to remain volatile, having at least one fuel sipper in your fleet, or as your only ride, makes perfect sense. But that doesn't mean you have to forgo fun. There are modest, quirky, and even sporty alternatives that are both fuel efficient and a blast to drive.



2010 MINI COOPER HARDTOP MAYFAIR EDITION

After a brief drive in a Mini years ago, I was prepared to not like this car. But even in lower-powered, non-Cooper S trim, it's a fun ride. The steering is joyfully direct and the car is a ball to drive on back roads. It's short on power in passing situations but it has a fine six-speed manual gearbox.

Price as Tested: \$25,000

Engine: 118 hp, 1.6-liter I4

Weight: 2,640 pounds

Fuel Economy: 28 city/37 highway



2010 SMART FORTWO PASSION CABRIOLET

This tiny novelty is an amusing open-top runabout that parks easily, has surprising space "for two," and returns high gas mileage. But the automatic transmission shifts painfully slowly and the cabin noise is significant. You can buy a Honda Fit, which boasts more space and similar fuel efficiency, for the same price.

Price as Tested: \$17,980

Engine: 70 hp, 1.0-liter three-cylinder

Weight: 1,852 pounds

Fuel Economy: 33 city/41 highway