

**TEST
EXTRA**

Ford Scorpio 2.3 16v



What's different?

A new 2.3-litre engine debuts in the Scorpio. Extra power allows a higher final drive ratio. No other changes.

FORD'S TOP SCORPIO RANGE NOW benefits from a new Dagenham-built 2.3-litre, 16-valve engine. It fits in between the two-litre eight-valve and the top-of-the-range 2.9-litre, 24-valve Cosworth V6 power units. This means goodbye to the 16-valve two-litre (see R9543A) on which this latest DOHC engine is based, and the 12-valve version of the V6, but the 2.5-litre turbo-diesel is retained.

Peak power of 145bhp is 11bhp up on the previous 2.0 16v engine, with peak torque of 149 lb ft – up 20 lb ft. A relatively flat torque curve ensures that a high proportion of the power is available from 2500rpm upwards.

Even on brief acquaintance we were much taken with this new engine. For a “big four” it’s a remarkably refined performer that revs smoothly all the way to the 6500rpm cut-out and feels eager in its acceleration.

Like most 16-valvers, though, it likes to rev and really gives of its best above 4000rpm. It will pull smoothly but lethargically – and with a hint of gruffness – from the mid-twenties in fourth and then becomes livelier and sweeter as the revs rise.

Ford claims strong performance, quoting 0–60mph in 9.2sec (over a second faster than the 2.0 16v) and a top speed of 130mph (2mph up). The automatic version is said to be only slightly slower, at 10.6 and 127mph respectively. The extra power has allowed a higher final drive ratio (from 4.27 to 3.91:1) to be used, giving more relaxed cruising; revs are down by 300rpm at 70mph, for example. Ford also says that fuel consumption has not suffered – we averaged 28½mpg with the 2.0 16v, so expect much about the same.

Improved performance is only part of the story, however, because Henry's had a blitz on lowering tailpipe emissions, improving refinement and reducing levels of NVH. “Tell me the old, old story”, did you say? Well, yes, it's true that quite often you hear of manufacturers claiming reductions in noise, vibration and harshness, but when you get to drive their “new,

improved" car you wonder what all the fuss was about. Not so in this case – Ford has really done an excellent job with the 2.3.

Key features of the new engine include a revised air intake system, new ribbing and strengthening of the block and a "quieter" sump. There's also a split-mass flywheel to ensure a smoother throttle response and the elimination of gear rattle. Perhaps most important is the provision of a unique Cosworth-developed twin balancer shaft system, chain-driven at the bottom of the engine, with rubber coated gears to reduce noise. The bottom line is a reduction of up to six decibels in interior noise, which is a lot in terms of volume and, according to Ford, puts the 2.3-litre Scorpio in the BMW 523 class.

The new engine is available in saloon or estate versions of higher-spec Scorpio models: Ghia, Ghia X and Ultima, and is £430 more than the previous 2.0 16v.

VERDICT

We thought that Ford had done well with the "old" 16v two-litre and were struck by its "new-found smoothness and easy-to-live-with nature", but it's done even better with the 2.3. This new engine is significantly smoother and quieter, and feels quicker, too. We shall be putting its performance and economy to the test in due course, but you can already put us down as greatly impressed. The trouble is that until Ford does something about restyling the Scorpio's controversial front-end, it will be a case of "nice legs, shame about the face."

FOR THE TECHNICAL

Same as for 2.0i 16v (see R9543A) except for:

ENGINE

Size 89.6 x 91.0mm = 2295cc

Power 145bhp at 5700rpm

Torque 149 lb ft at 4500rpm

TRANSMISSION

Mph per 1000rpm 22.3 in 5th

Just as we go to press, a revised Scorpio range for 1997 has been announced, featuring a three-model line-up. The choice of models has been reduced, but air conditioning is now standard across the range. The major changes are:

- Ghia: a power sunroof is available in place of air conditioning at no extra cost, or available in addition to air con as an extra.
- Ghia X: has power sunroof as standard, together with a 6000-Series CD tuner and new alloy wheels with 205/60 tyres.
- Ultima: has 16in alloy wheels with 205/55 tyres. An electric front passenger seat is also standard.

An optional sports pack is available on Ghia and Ghia X and features partial leather trim, sports seats, front fog-lamps and 16in alloy wheels with 225/55 tyres.

Engine availability

2.0i 8v manual	...	Ghia
2.3i 16v manual	...	Ghia, Ghia X, Ultima
2.3i 16v auto	...	Ghia, Ghia X, Ultima
2.5 TD manual		Ghia, Ghia X, Ultima
2.9 24v auto		Ghia, Ghia X, Ultima

