

2005 Ford Escape Hybrid

by Gary Dickinson

INTRODUCTION

The 2005 Ford Escape Hybrid is the first hybrid-electric SUV. The Escape Hybrid is a "full" hybrid, meaning it automatically switches between pure electric power, pure gasoline engine power or a combined operation to maximize efficiency and performance.

Ford claims that the gasoline engine and electric motor work in concert to provide performance similar to that of a 200 HP V-6 engine in the conventional Escape. Ford also states the Escape is an extremely clean vehicle to operate, producing 97 percent less hydrocarbon and oxides of nitrogen emissions than vehicles that meet today's nationwide Tier I emission standards.

The Escape Hybrid also produces as little as half the amount of carbon dioxide, a primary green house gas. The 330 volt battery pack is recharged by the engine and through the regenerative action of the electric motor during braking. So the batteries never need to be plugged in to be recharged. For comparison, sorry, no other SUV hybrids are yet available.

OVERVIEW

Ford has taken a major step forward by moving gas/electric drive hybrid technology into the SUV lineup. The Escape Hybrid performed as well as the conventional gas version but with a much lower fuel consumption and smog producing emission.

Fuel economy on this vehicle is better in city than highway because electric motors are more efficient at low speeds where gas engines are least efficient. All this and you get a AWD SUV which is much more versatile than the past hybrid line up of small compact vehicles.

You will have to weigh these advantages to the approximately \$7000 price difference and unknown reliability and repair cost of the new hybrid components. In my view, it is still worth a close look and consideration as the benefits to the fuel budget and environment could be huge especially if you do a lot of stop and go city type driving.

TESTED VEHICLE

Vehicle: 2005 Ford Escape Hybrid 4WD.

Class: Sport Utility

Engine: The 2.3 liter four cylinder DOHC gasoline engine yields 133 HP at 6,000 RPM and 129 lb-ft torque at 4,500 RPM. When combined with the 65 kW permanent magnet AC synchronous motor total output is 155 HP.

HV Battery: 330 volt nickel metal hydride battery pack consisting of 250 D-sized cells in a sealed enclosure.

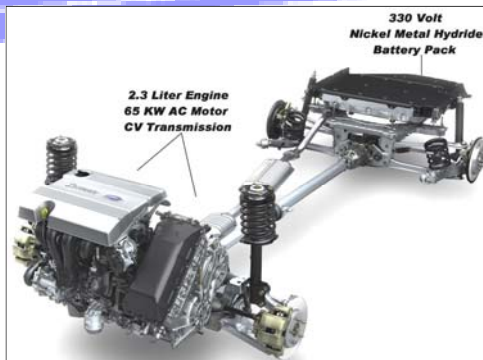
Transmission: Electronically controlled continuously variable.

Suspension: Front - independent McPherson struts. Rear - independent multi-link.

Brakes: Four-wheel disc assisted by regenerative braking from electric motor.

Base MSRP: \$28,405.

Tested Vehicle MSRP with options: \$32,740 (which includes a destination charge of \$590).



INTERIOR

☺ **Room:** Roomy cabin with plenty of headroom, shoulder room and leg room.

☹ **1st Row Seats:** Provides good back support but thigh support is limited and should be improved.

☹ **2nd Row Seats:** Adequate seat support but only enough room for two adults.

☹ **Ventilation:** The manual climate control systems functioned adequately but no dedicated air re-circulation control was included.

☺ **Power Outlet:** A 110 Volt Outlet is provided in center console which is exclusive to a hybrid vehicle.

☹ **Storage:** Limited storage area in console and door pockets.

☺ **Fit and Finish:** No interior fit or finish problems found.

TEST DRIVE

☺ **Acceleration:** Zero-60 MPH tested at 10.3 seconds, 55-65 MPH passing performance tested at 3.4 seconds.

☺ **Steering:** Tight with good on center response.

☺ **Handling:** Responsive with limited body roll.

☹ **Ride:** On the rough side.

☺ **Braking:** Sure and responsive.

☺ **Transmission:** Well controlled.

☺ **Interior Noise:** No idle noise due to gasoline engine shut down at stop or very low speeds.

☺ **Test drive mileage:** 28.5 MPG (mostly highway driving); EPA estimates 29H/33C.



EXTERIOR

☺ **Engine Service Points:** All fluid service points are located around perimeter of engine compartment for easy access.

☺ **Body:** No fit or finish problems found. Quality craftsmanship was very evident.



VEHICLE CAPACITIES

Seating: 5

Cargo Volume: Rear seat up - 27.6 cu. ft., Rear seat down - 65.5 cu. ft.

Base Curb Weight: 3,782 lbs.

Maximum Towing: 1,000 lbs. (properly equipped)

Fuel Tank: 15 gallons.

Test Drive is conducted and written by the Nutz & Boltz staff, who contribute their own unbiased and unfettered comments in order to meet our mission: "To help save consumers time and money, and to help save motorists lives."