

2002 Ford T-Bird

by Gary Dickinson

INTRODUCTION

What's New: Everything! The 2002 Ford Thunderbird is an all-new sports car and is Ford's modern interpretation of the original classic Thunderbird. Compare the 1955 and 2002 Thunderbird photos to view similarities.

Overview: The revived T-Bird is more of a luxury car than a sports car. It exhibits good handling and performance but not with the same agility of a true sports car. The styling is fantastic and luxury features are abundant. Both interior and exterior fit and finish needs to improve.



TESTED VEHICLE

Vehicle: 2002 Thunderbird 2-door convertible roadster.

Engine: 3.9L DOHC V8, aluminum block and heads, 252hp @ 6,100 rpm, 261 lb.-ft. @ 4,300 rpm.

Transmission: 5-speed automatic.

Brakes: 4-Wheel disc w/anti-lock.

Base Price: \$38,465.

Tested Vehicle MSRP with options: \$39,795 (which includes a destination charge of \$530).

EXTERIOR

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

• **Body:** Three fit and two finish problems found. Paint was peeling off two small areas on the front bumper.



TEST DRIVE

• **Acceleration:** 0-60 mph tested at 7.3 seconds. 55-65 mph passing performance tested at 2.8 seconds.

• **Steering:** Excellent on center response.

• **Handling:** Very responsive in the turns with little body roll.

• **Braking:** Sure and stable.

• **Ride:** Firm but comfortable.

• **Transmission:** Shifts smoothly and accurately.

• **Interior Noise:** High wind noise at cruising speeds.

Test drive mileage: 21 mpg (mostly highway driving); EPA estimates 23 mpg highway/17 mpg city.



INTERIOR

• **Front Seats:** Very comfortable, provides good thigh support and excellent lateral back support. The driver's six way power seat produces excellent seat positioning.

• **Door Locks:** Programmable automatic lock feature.

• **Windows:** Short drop glass sure seating feature improves door efforts and convertible top sealing. This feature slightly lowers the glass when either door is opened and returns the glass to the closed position when the door is closed and the transmission is shifted out of park.

• **Ventilation:** Includes dedicated air re-circulation control to help block outside air fumes from entering interior during ventilation, A/C or heating.

• **Dash Board & Steering Wheel:** Great design layout with good visibility of all controls and gauges except side view mirror and panel dimmer controls which are partially blocked by the steering wheel. Steering wheel automatically retracts toward the dash when ignition key is removed to aid drivers entrance and departure.

• **Headroom:** Very limited for tall drivers.

• **Center Console:** The center console is designed in such a way that both the console compartment and tall cups in console cup holder blocks the driver's direct reach to the transmission shifter.

• **Storage:** Storage compartments have limited space. Unfortunately this is normal for a roadster.



VEHICLE CAPACITIES

Passenger Volume: 52.6 cu ft.

Interior Storage Volume: 1.8 cu ft.

Trunk Volume: 6.7 cu ft.

Maximum Towing: 1,000 lbs.

Fuel Tank: 18 gallons.



Test Drive is conducted and written by one of 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.