

Driven: Ford EcoSport Ambiente 1.5 Automatic



By [Imran Salie](#)

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Last year, Ford Motor Company Southern Africa added a six-speed automatic transmission edition to the popular EcoSport Ambiente petrol derivative. This automatic version was complemented by specification upgrades on the Trend and Titanium models. I tested this car over a period of seven days to see what the automatic version offers.



It has a three-cylinder 1.5-litre petrol engine that delivers 91kW of power and 151Nm of torque. I found that it lacks in oomph when driving on highways, it could be that its kerb weight is what causes the sluggishness, or it could be that the overall engine needs a bit more performance. This was my only major gripe with this automatic. It should be noted that the auto is indeed capable of overtaking other cars on highways.

When driving in the city and suburbs the Ambiente automatic is more comfortable and sturdy. I liked that the gearbox was responsive in tighter-spaced roads and in shifting to lower gears.

On the inside, there's cloth seats and plastic trim finishes. There isn't anything overall negative about it and I found myself comfortably seated in the front seat when driving. My family did complain about the room space at the back though. The rear window is also a bit narrow and small, but I could still see everything behind me.

Added features

In addition to the new Ambiente model, the EcoSport Trend and Titanium derivatives benefitted from the inclusion of Ford's Collision Mitigation System – a pre-collision assist feature that alerts the driver of a potential collision with the vehicle ahead, pre-charges the brakes and, if necessary, applies maximum braking pressure once the driver presses the brake pedal.

Safety is important when it comes to driving, and I found this feature to be useful when driving along the M6 with cars flying past me in the opposite direction.

Cruise control with an adaptive speed limiter has also been added to the Trend models, while the Titanium gains front parking sensors to complement the rear sensors that are standard across the range.

ABS brakes, Electronic Stability Control and Roll Stability Control and Hill Launch Assist are added to the model.

The EcoSport Ambiente incorporates Ford's SYNC with Bluetooth and Voice Control, as well as two USB ports, six speakers and a 4.2-inch screen.

The Trend models boast a more sophisticated version of the SYNC infotainment system with a 6.5-inch colour touchscreen, while the Titanium's SYNC 3 features an 8-inch display as well as embedded turn-by-turn navigation.

All EcoSport models come standard with Ford Protect which includes a four-year/60,000km service plan, three-year unlimited distance roadside assistance and four-year/120,000km comprehensive warranty. This is complemented by a five-year/unlimited distance corrosion warranty. Service intervals are every 15,000km.

Model range and recommended retail prices

- **EcoSport 1.5 Ambiente 6AT - R297,600**

- EcoSport 1.5 Ambiente 5MT - R279,700
- EcoSport 1.5 TDCi Ambiente 5MT - R289,900
- EcoSport 1.0 EcoBoost Trend 6MT - R319,200
- EcoSport 1.0 EcoBoost Trend 6AT - R333,900
- EcoSport 1.0 EcoBoost Titanium 6MT - R357,000
- EcoSport 1.0 EcoBoost Titanium 6AT - R370,400

The Ambiente auto comes with a standard four-year/60,000km service plan

The decision to make an automatic version was a wise one seeing that the EcoSport is popular and well-sold. In fact, it would not have made sense for Ford to only have a manual version. Overall, I was happy with the performance of the automatic version and I'm sure that it will continue the strong sales run the EcoSport is having.

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