Ford Fiesta
Global Heritage

U.S. and Canada 1978-1980

Introduction
For the U.S. and Canada Fiesta arrived as a 1978 model, equipped with the 1.6-liter Kent OHV I-4 engine – the largest offering in European markets. This sturdy block earned an enviable motorsport reputation by powering a legion of Sports Car Club of America (SCCA) competitors in Formula Ford single-seat racing cars. Fiesta paired the Kent engine with a mandatory four-speed manual transmission and wrapped in a light-weight body. The car became an instant favorite. Car and Driver pushed a Fiesta from 0-60 in 10.4 seconds and to an observed 97mph top speed.

Four Trim Levels
U.S. and Canada-bound Fiestas were built at Ford's Cologne, Germany production facility. Offered in a single body style – a two-door hatchback – Fiesta was available in four distinctive trim levels: Standard, Décor, Sport and Ghia. Standard models stressed value, while the Décor series provided beltline trim and softer interior materials. The Sport added a tachometer, a stabilizer bar, stripes and seats covered in a Native American pattern while the high-level Ghia series added velour seating and richer appointments.

Banner Year
1979 was the original Fiesta's big year in the U.S. with 81,273 units sold. Clever packaging and space utilization made Fiesta the ideal vehicle for the one car household of a young single or couple. Folding down the back seat and opening the hatchback turned the Fiesta into a capable hauler. North American specification Fiestas enjoyed both the largest engine and available air conditioning.

SCCA Racer
The 1980s dawned with the sprightly Fiesta continuing to find favor among the young and young-at-heart. Fiesta was a dominant force in Showroom Stock C road racing, the entry-level SCCA class for street-legal production cars. An aspiring racer could install a four-point roll bar, some competition safety belts, a driver's side window net and duct tape on the headlights, transforming commuter transportation into a competitive track star.

Winding Down
The North American Fiesta was discontinued to make room for the all-new 1981 Ford Escort. Clever planners at Ford realized that Fiesta's cult-like following still would find Fiesta a compelling proposition. To that end, a full 47,707 Fiestas went out the door – all 1980 model year cars – during 1981. When gas prices spiked in the early 1980s, a clean used Fiesta could command more than its original MSRP.

Still Racing Today
Fiestas were enthusiastically driven to high mileage accumulations. Common on American streets into the early 1990s, almost 300,000 Fiestas were sold as inexpensive, fuel-efficient and fun alternatives to the dreary small cars of the day. Several Fiestas survived to play roles in both SCCA Improved Touring class C and Rally competition. Recently, Ford Racing has resumed production of the legendary Kent engine block, to the delight of Formula Ford and Mk 1 Fiesta enthusiasts, worldwide.

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