

Ford El Falcon



ford el falcon

ford el falcon represents a significant chapter in Australian automotive history, a testament to Ford's enduring legacy on the local market. This article delves deep into the Ford EL Falcon, exploring its evolution from the EA generation, its various models and specifications, its performance capabilities, and its lasting impact on Australian car culture. We'll examine the key features that made the EL Falcon a popular choice for families and performance enthusiasts alike, from its comfortable interior to its robust engine options. Furthermore, we'll discuss its place in the broader context of Australian-made vehicles and the reasons behind its continued appeal among collectors and everyday drivers. Prepare to discover the multifaceted story of the Ford EL Falcon, a vehicle that truly captured the spirit of Australian motoring.

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The Ford EL Falcon: A Comprehensive Exploration

The Ford EL Falcon stands as a pivotal model in the long and storied history of Ford Australia. Released in 1996, it represented the final iteration of the EA-derived Falcon platform, building upon decades of local development and refinement. The EL Falcon was designed to meet the diverse needs of Australian motorists, offering a blend of practicality, performance, and comfort that resonated with a wide audience. From its introduction, the EL Falcon aimed to solidify Ford's position in the competitive Australian large car segment, offering a compelling alternative to its rivals.

This generation of the Falcon was particularly well-received for its technological advancements and improved driving dynamics compared to its predecessors. Ford invested heavily in updating the platform, focusing on enhancing both the mechanicals and the aesthetics to ensure the EL Falcon remained at the forefront of its class. The commitment to local manufacturing meant that the EL Falcon was intrinsically linked to the Australian identity, becoming a symbol of homegrown automotive engineering prowess.

Evolution of the Ford Falcon: From EA to EL

The journey to the Ford EL Falcon began with the EA Falcon, introduced in 1988. The EA marked a significant departure from previous Falcon designs, embracing a more aerodynamic and European-influenced styling. While the EA was a bold step forward, it faced criticism for its perceived lack of refinement and some mechanical issues. Ford responded to this feedback with subsequent updates, including the EB, ED, and EF generations, each introducing incremental improvements in areas like suspension, engine management, and build quality.

The EF Falcon, launched in 1994, laid the groundwork for the EL. It introduced a revised independent rear suspension system, which significantly improved ride and handling characteristics. The EF also saw enhancements to the engine offerings, particularly the introduction of the more powerful 4.0-litre inline-six engines. These refinements were crucial in preparing the Falcon for its ultimate evolution into the EL model, which would build upon the EF's strengths and address any remaining shortcomings.

The EF Falcon: A Precursor to the EL

The EF Falcon served as a vital stepping stone in the development of the Australian Falcon. Its introduction saw a renewed focus on manufacturing quality and a significant upgrade to the vehicle's suspension. The independent rear suspension (IRS) on all models, a first for the Falcon in many configurations, drastically improved its handling and ride comfort, making it a more competitive proposition against its rivals. This technological leap was a key factor in shaping the direction of the EL

Falcon.

Refinements Leading to the EL Falcon

The development of the EL Falcon was characterized by a series of targeted refinements aimed at elevating its performance, refinement, and overall appeal. Ford engineers focused on perfecting the engine management systems, particularly for the inline-six engines, to extract more power and improve fuel efficiency. Changes to the transmission, suspension tuning, and aerodynamic aids also played a crucial role in creating a more polished and capable vehicle. The EL Falcon represented the culmination of the EA-EF-EL lineage, a testament to continuous improvement driven by market feedback and engineering innovation.

Key Ford EL Falcon Models and Specifications

The Ford EL Falcon was offered in a variety of distinct models, catering to different buyer needs and preferences. Each variant shared the core platform but offered unique features, trim levels, and optional equipment. The range typically included base models, sports-oriented variants, and luxury-focused versions, ensuring there was an EL Falcon to suit most Australian families and individuals.

Understanding the specific specifications of each model is key to appreciating the breadth of the EL Falcon offering. From engine choices to interior appointments and safety features, the variations within the EL range provided consumers with considerable choice. The styling also saw subtle differences between models, particularly in the grille, wheel designs, and badging, allowing enthusiasts to easily distinguish between them.

Ford EL Falcon Futura

The Futura model typically occupied a mid-range position within the EL Falcon lineup. It offered a comfortable and well-equipped interior, often featuring upgraded cloth trim, power windows, and a more refined sound system than the base models. The Futura was designed to appeal to families seeking a practical and well-appointed vehicle for daily use. Its specifications often included features that balanced comfort and convenience.

Ford EL Falcon XR6

The EL Falcon XR6 was the performance-oriented variant, a popular choice for those seeking a more engaging driving experience. It featured a more potent version of the 4.0-litre inline-six engine, often with enhanced intake and exhaust systems for improved power output. The XR6 also boasted sports suspension tuning for sharper handling, distinctive XR badging, and often a more aggressive exterior styling package, including unique alloy wheels and body kits. The XR6 became an iconic model within the Falcon family.

Ford EL Falcon XR8

The EL Falcon XR8 was the pinnacle of performance within the range, distinguished by its potent V8 engine. It was powered by the venerable 5.0-litre Windsor V8, which delivered significantly more power and torque than the inline-six options. The XR8 was engineered for enthusiasts, featuring a performance-tuned suspension, upgraded brakes, and a distinctive V8 body kit that set it apart from other Falcon models. The XR8 represented the ultimate expression of Australian V8 muscle within the EL Falcon era.

Ford EL Falcon Fairmont and Fairmont Ghia

The Fairmont and Fairmont Ghia models represented the more luxurious end of the EL Falcon spectrum. These variants were designed for comfort and refinement, often featuring premium interior materials such as leather-accented seating, woodgrain or brushed metal trim, and a more comprehensive list of standard features. The Fairmont Ghia, in particular, offered a higher level of luxury and technology, often including climate control, advanced sound systems, and power-adjustable seats. These models were aimed at buyers seeking a sophisticated and comfortable large sedan.

Engine Options and Performance of the Ford EL Falcon

The Ford EL Falcon was renowned for its robust and reliable engine offerings, primarily focusing on its potent inline-six cylinder engines and the iconic V8 option. These powertrains were developed and refined over many years by Ford Australia, ensuring they were well-suited to the demanding Australian conditions. The choice of engine significantly influenced the driving experience and performance characteristics of the EL Falcon.

The performance of the EL Falcon was a key selling point, particularly for the XR variants. Ford's commitment to developing powerful and responsive engines ensured that the Falcon remained a strong contender in its segment, capable of delivering both brisk acceleration and comfortable cruising.

The 4.0-Litre Inline-Six Engines

The mainstay of the EL Falcon range was the 4.0-litre inline-six engine. This engine was available in several states of tune, with the standard versions providing a good balance of power and fuel efficiency. The XR6 variant received a more performance-oriented version of this engine, often featuring revised camshafts, improved intake and exhaust systems, and enhanced engine management for a noticeable increase in power and torque. This engine was praised for its smoothness, durability, and strong low-end torque, making it a very practical choice for everyday driving.

The 5.0-Litre Windsor V8

For those seeking ultimate performance, the EL Falcon XR8 offered the legendary 5.0-litre Windsor V8 engine. This iconic Australian V8 was known for its throaty exhaust note and strong acceleration. The V8 option provided a significant performance advantage, making the XR8 a favourite among enthusiasts. Paired with either a manual or automatic transmission, the V8-powered Falcon delivered a classic muscle car experience, a hallmark of Australian performance motoring.

Transmission Options

The EL Falcon was available with a choice of transmissions to suit driver preference. Both manual and automatic transmissions were offered, with the automatic transmissions being particularly popular for their ease of use in daily driving. Ford's automatic gearboxes were generally well-regarded for their smooth shifting and reliability. For the performance-oriented XR models, a manual gearbox was often available, providing a more engaging and direct connection to the engine for keen drivers.

Interior Comfort and Features

The interior of the Ford EL Falcon was designed with comfort, practicality, and occupant well-being in mind. Ford aimed to provide a spacious and user-friendly cabin that could accommodate families comfortably on long journeys. The layout was intuitive, with controls easily accessible to the driver. The quality of materials and the level of features varied across the different models, from the functional base models to the luxurious Fairmont Ghia.

Key interior features contributed to the EL Falcon's appeal as a family car and a comfortable cruiser. The attention to detail in the design and the inclusion of thoughtful amenities made the EL Falcon a pleasant place to spend time, whether on short commutes or extended road trips across Australia.

Spacious Cabin and Seating

The EL Falcon offered a generous cabin space, a hallmark of Australian-designed large sedans. The front and rear seating provided ample legroom and headroom for occupants. The seats were generally well-padded and supportive, contributing to comfort during longer drives. The use of quality cloth or optional leather upholstery in higher-spec models further enhanced the interior ambiance and tactile experience.

Ergonomics and Controls

The dashboard layout of the EL Falcon was designed with driver ergonomics in

mind. The instrument cluster was clear and easy to read, providing essential information at a glance. The placement of controls, including the audio system, climate control, and other functions, was logical and intuitive, allowing the driver to operate them with minimal distraction. This focus on user-friendliness was a key aspect of the EL Falcon's appeal.

Comfort and Convenience Features

- Power windows and mirrors
- Air conditioning (standard or climate control depending on model)
- Central locking
- Cruise control
- Adjustable steering column
- Good quality audio systems with multiple speakers
- Ample storage compartments throughout the cabin

These features, while perhaps commonplace today, were important considerations for buyers in the mid-to-late 1990s and contributed to the EL Falcon's reputation as a well-equipped vehicle for its time.

Exterior Design and Styling

The exterior design of the Ford EL Falcon was a refinement of the EF generation, building on its more modern and aerodynamic lines. While the underlying platform was familiar, subtle tweaks and enhancements gave the EL a distinct visual identity. The styling aimed to be contemporary and appealing, reflecting the trends of the era while maintaining the classic Falcon presence.

The exterior details, from the grille and headlights to the wheel designs and body kits, played a crucial role in differentiating the various EL Falcon models. Ford's designers worked to create a cohesive and attractive look that appealed to a broad range of buyers, from families to performance enthusiasts.

Aerodynamic and Modern Lines

The EL Falcon featured smooth, flowing lines that contributed to its aerodynamic efficiency and modern aesthetic. The rounded edges and integrated bumpers were characteristic of automotive design in the mid-1990s. This design language helped the Falcon achieve a lower drag coefficient, contributing to improved fuel economy and reduced wind noise at higher

speeds.

Model-Specific Styling Cues

The visual distinctions between the various EL Falcon models were a key aspect of their appeal. The base models featured simpler grille designs and steel wheels with wheel covers, while the Futura and Fairmont offered more refined styling with alloy wheels and chrome accents. The XR variants, such as the XR6 and XR8, sported more aggressive body kits, unique alloy wheel designs, and distinctive badging that clearly communicated their performance intent. These styling elements allowed buyers to express their preferences and identify with specific Falcon sub-cultures.

The Ford EL Falcon in Australian Automotive Culture

The Ford EL Falcon holds a special place in Australian automotive culture, representing the final chapter of an era of Australian-manufactured large sedans. It was more than just a car; it was a symbol of local industry, engineering capability, and a significant part of the Australian motoring landscape for decades. The Falcon, in its various forms, had been a staple of Australian roads for generations, and the EL represented the culmination of this lineage.

The EL Falcon was a common sight in driveways across the nation, used by families, tradespeople, and enthusiasts alike. Its versatility and robust nature made it suitable for a wide range of applications, from daily commuting to long-distance touring. The strong aftermarket support and the enduring passion for the Falcon brand meant that the EL continued to be a relevant and popular choice even after its production ceased.

A Symbol of Australian Manufacturing

During its production run, the Ford EL Falcon was a significant contributor to the Australian automotive industry. It provided employment for thousands of workers in manufacturing, engineering, and design. The Falcon's success was a testament to Ford Australia's ability to develop and produce vehicles that met the specific needs and preferences of the Australian market. The EL Falcon, as one of the last locally produced large sedans, is particularly cherished by those who value Australia's manufacturing heritage.

Enduring Popularity and Community

Despite the cessation of local manufacturing, the Ford EL Falcon continues to enjoy enduring popularity among enthusiasts. Dedicated owners' clubs and online communities remain active, sharing knowledge, celebrating their vehicles, and keeping the Falcon spirit alive. The EL Falcon is often a popular choice for restoration projects and modifications, with a strong

aftermarket catering to its continued appeal. This sustained interest highlights the deep connection Australians have with the Falcon nameplate.

EL Falcon Variants: Sedan, Wagon, and Ute

The Ford EL Falcon was not just a sedan; it was offered in a variety of body styles to cater to different lifestyle needs. The availability of sedan, wagon, and utility (ute) versions ensured that the Falcon platform could serve a broad spectrum of the Australian automotive market, from family transport to commercial applications.

Each body style shared the core engineering and mechanicals of the EL Falcon, but with distinct practical advantages. The wagon offered increased cargo space over the sedan, while the ute provided an open cargo bed for carrying goods, making it a versatile workhorse.

The EL Falcon Sedan

The sedan was the most common body style for the Ford EL Falcon, representing the traditional large family car. It offered comfortable seating for five occupants and a decent-sized boot for luggage. The sedan variants were popular for their blend of comfort, performance, and practicality, making them ideal for everyday driving and long-distance travel.

The EL Falcon Wagon

The EL Falcon wagon provided an extended roofline and increased cargo capacity, making it a more practical choice for families or individuals who required more space. With the rear seats folded down, the wagon offered a substantial load area, suitable for carrying everything from groceries to camping gear. The wagon shared the same driving dynamics and engine options as the sedan, offering a versatile family hauler.

The EL Falcon Ute

The EL Falcon ute, often referred to as the "two-door utility," was a popular choice for tradespeople and those needing a vehicle for light commercial purposes. It featured a separate cargo tray behind the cabin, offering excellent carrying capacity. The ute retained the comfortable Falcon cabin and offered robust performance, making it a capable and practical work vehicle. The XR variants were also available as utes, combining performance with utility.

Common Issues and Maintenance Considerations

for the Ford EL Falcon

Like any vehicle of its age, the Ford EL Falcon can experience certain common issues and requires regular maintenance to remain in optimal condition. Understanding these potential problems and adhering to a consistent maintenance schedule is crucial for preserving the longevity and reliability of an EL Falcon. Ford Australia provided excellent engineering, but time and usage naturally lead to wear and tear.

Regular servicing, including oil changes, filter replacements, and fluid checks, is paramount. Attention to specific components that are known to be wear items will help prevent more significant and costly repairs down the line. Enthusiasts and owners often share their experiences and knowledge, contributing to a well-informed community regarding EL Falcon maintenance.

Engine and Drivetrain Wear

While the 4.0-litre inline-six engines are generally robust, some components may require attention over time. Spark plug leads and ignition coils can be common wear items, leading to misfires. The automatic transmissions, while generally reliable, can benefit from regular fluid changes to ensure smooth operation. For V8 models, typical V8 maintenance practices apply, including checking for oil leaks and ensuring the cooling system is in good order.

Suspension and Braking Components

The suspension system, especially if the vehicle has high mileage or has been driven enthusiastically, may require attention. Components like shock absorbers, bushings, and ball joints can wear out over time, affecting ride quality and handling. Brake pads, rotors, and brake fluid should be regularly inspected and replaced as needed. Given the Falcon's size and weight, reliable braking is essential.

Electrical and Cosmetic Issues

As with many vehicles from this era, some minor electrical gremlins can appear, such as issues with power window motors or central locking systems. The interior trim, while generally durable, can show signs of wear and tear, with plastics sometimes becoming brittle. Rust can also be a concern, particularly in areas prone to moisture, so regular inspection and treatment of any potential rust spots are advisable.

The Lasting Legacy of the Ford EL Falcon

The Ford EL Falcon leaves behind a significant and enduring legacy in Australian automotive history. It represents the culmination of decades of local development and refinement of the Falcon platform, a vehicle that

became synonymous with Australian motoring. The EL Falcon was a product of its time, embodying the practicality, performance, and comfort that Australian buyers expected from their large sedans.

Its impact extends beyond its years of production. The EL Falcon continues to be celebrated by enthusiasts, maintained by passionate owners, and remembered as a key part of Australia's automotive heritage. The dedication of the Australian automotive industry in producing such a capable and popular vehicle is a story worth telling and remembering.

A Chapter in Australian Automotive History

The EL Falcon, as the final iteration of the EA-derived platform, marks the end of an important era for Ford Australia. It was a vehicle that successfully blended Australian engineering ingenuity with global design influences, creating a car that was both competitive on the international stage and perfectly suited to Australian conditions. The success of the EL Falcon underscored the capability and importance of local car manufacturing.

Continued Relevance and Appreciation

Today, the Ford EL Falcon is appreciated not only for its historical significance but also for its inherent qualities as a well-built and enjoyable vehicle to drive. Its strong inline-six engines, comfortable ride, and spacious interiors continue to appeal to a new generation of enthusiasts and everyday drivers. The ongoing availability of parts and a strong community of owners ensure that the EL Falcon will remain a cherished part of the Australian automotive landscape for years to come.

Frequently Asked Questions

What makes the Ford Falcon XR8 particularly special compared to other Falcon models?

The Ford Falcon XR8 is renowned for its powerful V8 engine, typically a supercharged 'Miami' V8. This, combined with its sporty styling, performance-oriented suspension and braking, and often a premium interior, sets it apart as the high-performance flagship of the Falcon range, offering a thrilling driving experience.

What are some common modifications or upgrades enthusiasts perform on Ford Falcon EL models?

Enthusiasts often focus on enhancing performance with upgrades like aftermarket exhaust systems, cold air intakes, performance camshafts, and ECU remapping. Suspension upgrades, such as lowering springs and improved shock absorbers, are also popular for better handling. Aesthetic modifications like custom wheels, body kits, and interior trim updates are also common.

What are the key differences between an EL Falcon and the preceding AU Falcon?

The EL Falcon, produced from 1996-1998, was an evolution of the EA/EB/ED generation. It featured significant styling updates, particularly in the front and rear, and interior refinements. The AU Falcon, introduced in 1998, represented a radical departure with its distinctive "New Edge" styling and a completely new platform, often considered a more controversial design.

What is the general market value and collectibility of a well-maintained Ford Falcon EL today?

The market value of a well-maintained EL Falcon varies greatly depending on the specific model (e.g., Fairmont, XR6, XR8), condition, mileage, and originality. While not yet considered a 'classic' in the same vein as earlier Falcons, well-preserved V8 models like the XR8 and enthusiast-tuned XR6s are gaining collectibility and are appreciating in value, especially those with low mileage and documented history.

What were the most popular engine options available for the Ford Falcon EL?

The Ford Falcon EL was primarily offered with Ford's reliable inline six-cylinder engines, most notably the 4.0L (200kW) 'Intech' engine. For performance enthusiasts, the potent 5.0L Windsor V8 engine was also a highly sought-after option, particularly in the XR8 models, offering significantly more power.

Are there any specific model variants of the EL Falcon that are particularly sought after by collectors?

Yes, the performance-oriented variants are generally the most sought after by collectors. The Ford Falcon EL XR8, with its V8 engine and sporty enhancements, is highly desirable. Similarly, the EL XR6, particularly those that have been well-maintained or modified tastefully, also attracts significant interest from enthusiasts who appreciate its blend of performance and everyday usability.

What kind of fuel economy can one expect from a Ford Falcon EL, depending on the engine choice?

Fuel economy for the Ford Falcon EL varies by engine and transmission. The 4.0L inline-six engines typically offered a combined fuel consumption in the range of 10-12 L/100km, depending on driving conditions and whether it was an automatic or manual. The 5.0L V8 would naturally consume more, often averaging around 13-15 L/100km in combined driving, though this could be higher with performance-oriented driving.

Additional Resources

Here are 9 book titles related to the Ford Falcon, each starting with "" and followed by a short description:

1. The Falcon's Flight: A History of the Ford Falcon

This comprehensive book chronicles the entire lineage of the Ford Falcon, from its inception as a compact car designed to rival European imports to its evolution into larger, more powerful models. It delves into the design philosophy, key engineering innovations, and the cultural impact of this iconic American automobile. Readers will discover how the Falcon captured the spirit of its times and cemented its place in automotive history.

2. Under the Hood: Restoring and Maintaining Your Ford Falcon

For enthusiasts and DIY mechanics, this practical guide offers detailed instructions and expert advice on restoring and maintaining various generations of the Ford Falcon. It covers everything from engine overhauls and transmission work to body repairs and interior refurbishment. The book is filled with helpful diagrams, troubleshooting tips, and parts sourcing information essential for any Falcon owner.

3. Racing the Falcon: From the Drag Strip to the Street

This thrilling account explores the rich racing heritage of the Ford Falcon, highlighting its surprising success in various motorsport disciplines. It features stories of legendary drivers and iconic Falcon race cars, detailing their victories and the technological advancements that propelled them forward. The book captures the raw power and performance that made the Falcon a formidable competitor.

4. Falcon Generations: A Collector's Guide

This beautifully illustrated guide serves as an indispensable resource for collectors of the Ford Falcon. It meticulously details each model year, trim level, and significant variation, providing insights into their collectible status and market value. With extensive photography and historical context, it helps enthusiasts identify, evaluate, and appreciate the diversity of the Falcon lineup.

5. The Falcon Era: Post-War American Automotive Design

This insightful book examines the Ford Falcon within the broader context of post-World War II American automotive design. It analyzes the styling trends, economic factors, and societal shifts that influenced the Falcon's creation and its subsequent popularity. The text explores how the Falcon's design reflected and contributed to the changing landscape of American culture and mobility.

6. My Falcon Story: Anecdotes from Owners and Enthusiasts

This collection of personal stories offers a heartwarming look at the enduring connection people have with their Ford Falcons. Through a series of engaging anecdotes, owners share their memories of driving, restoring, and falling in love with these classic cars. The book celebrates the emotional bonds formed with the Falcon, showcasing its role in personal histories.

7. The Falcon's Secret: Uncovering Automotive Legends

This intriguing book delves into lesser-known facts, prototypes, and experimental models of the Ford Falcon. It uncovers the hidden stories and intriguing developments that didn't make it into mainstream production but significantly impacted the Falcon's legacy. Readers will discover fascinating insights into the automotive innovation and creative processes behind this beloved car.

8. Falcon Country: A Road Trip Through Automotive Americana

This evocative travelogue takes readers on a journey across America, tracing the historical routes and cultural hotspots associated with the Ford Falcon. It weaves together personal travel experiences with historical accounts of

how the Falcon became a symbol of freedom and the open road. The book captures the spirit of adventure and the lasting impact of this American classic on road culture.

9. The Falcon's Evolution: From Compact to Muscle Car

This focused study tracks the dramatic transformation of the Ford Falcon over its production life, charting its journey from an economical compact car to a powerful muscle car contender. It highlights the key design and engineering decisions that allowed the Falcon to adapt and thrive in changing automotive markets. The book provides a detailed analysis of how the Falcon evolved to meet consumer demands and industry trends.

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