

# 2011 Ford Explorer – Explorer tows a new line



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**Daniel Barron** - Published: 26 07 2010

Twenty years after creating the sport utility vehicle segment, Ford has officially taken the wraps off the completely redesigned 2011 Ford Explorer, which will be available in the winter of 2010. The new Explorer looks to re-energize the segment with features such as rear inflatable seatbelts, MyFord Touch technology and a 2.0-litre EcoBoost engine.

Events held in cities throughout North America showed off the Explorer in the flesh to media, dealers and Ford representatives. Though Chief Nameplate Engineer Jim Holland says that the new Explorer “had to look modern and contemporary – inside and out – yet be instantly recognizable as an Explorer”, it’s a lot of the former and not a lot of the latter.



That’s not a bad thing, mind you, but it’s clear that in terms of styling, this is a completely different beast from past models. The front looks a lot like the new F150, while the rear shares traits with the redesigned Taurus sedan.

Inside, the Explorer boasts excellent fit and finish to compliment the oodles of technology available. The new Terrain Management System simplifies four-wheel drive, incorporating a knob on the centre console that can be moved on-the-fly depending on terrain and weather situations.

The automaker’s slick MyFord Touch technology, which is an optional feature on the Explorer, replaces traditional knobs and buttons with a touchscreen LCD display that houses all controls, from climate, to radio, to SYNC. It’s a system that looks like it belongs exclusively in high-end luxury vehicles, so it’s quite a boon for Ford to have it available in a non-luxury vehicle like the Explorer.

The safety feature many people are sure to be talking about - but won’t want to experience firsthand - is the inflatable seatbelts that will be available in the second row seats. Since rear seat occupants are more susceptible to head, chest and neck injuries in a collision, the airbags help by spreading impact forces across more than five times the area than conventional seat belts. Ford says that this will reduce pressure on the chest while helping to control head and neck motion.

The third row seats have available power folding capabilities, and second and third row seats, when folded, make a completely flat load floor. The back of the seats are covered in carpet though; here’s hoping for a removable plastic cargo floor mat so not all drivers have to worry about getting mud and grime caught in the carpet.

The two seats in the third row are surprisingly roomy, though a little tough to get in and out of. They're still best left for kids, but my 6'1" frame, once parked in the seat, fits nicely, with knees barely brushing against the second row seatbacks and head doing the same with the roof.

Second row seats have lots of legroom, and there's something to be said about the more environmentally-friendly soy-based foam used in the seats - they're really quite soft and comfortable, while still being plenty supportive. We'll wait and see what a two hour trip to the cottage feels like first before coming to a final decision, though.

The interior of the model on display also features double-stitched leather seats, a dual sunroof (one for both front and rear passengers), and adjustable air vents for all three rows.

Though a larger 3.5-litre V6 will be available in the Explorer, the smaller EcoBoost engine will get better highway fuel economy than the Toyota Highlander Hybrid according to Ford. The latter will produce a projected 237-horsepower at 5,500 rpm and 250 lbs.-ft. of torque from 1,700 - 4,000 rpm, while the V6 will make an estimated 290 horsepower and 255 lbs.-ft. of torque.

The Explorer will be assembled at Ford's Chicago manufacturing facility.

To see more photos of the new **2011 Ford Explorer** [click here](#)