

## 2008 Ford Falcon Orion update

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**Steane Klose**

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2008 Ford Falcon Orion update

The most important Australian new car release in 2008 will be the Ford Falcon, codenamed Orion. With sales of the current model Falcon on the slide in the face of stiff competition from a brace of next-gen models including VE Commodore and Toyota's Aurion, Ford Australia, their dealers and fans must be counting down the weeks.

We will have to wait until the Melbourne Motor Show in late February 2008 for our first close-up look at the Orion Falcon but in what can only be described as a brilliant marketing move, Ford have released their own images (first gallery below) of disguised test fleet Orions.

Speculation is rife concerning the engineering details and Ford are not expected to clarify anything until February next year, at the Melbourne unveiling. So here is what is currently known;

- The Orion Falcon will be officially launched in May 2008.
- Expect ute and high-performance versions to be launched between May and the end of June along with a possible wagon variant.
- Wagon details are unknown but don't be surprised to see an Orion wagon based on the sedan platform much like the VE Commodore wagon and Sportwagon.
- Although being heralded as a "new" Falcon, the Orion is heavily based on the outgoing models platform. Front suspension will be new but the major changes are in the sheetmetal, A couple of hundred million doesn't buy a "from the ground-up" new model, just ask Holden...
- Safety will be an Orion high-point with it being rumoured that Ford are shooting for a 5-Star NCAP rating, making it the first Australian made sedan to achieve the top score. ESC will remain standard along with the possibility of side and curtain airbags.
- The current 4.0-litre I6 engine will be carried across to the Orion range largely unchanged, although expect more power and improved economy from this already excellent engine. The I6 will be replaced in 2010 by [Fords modular V6](#) range and this could be when we see our first diesel Falcon.

- Orion V8 models will see increased power outputs both in the Ford and [FPV range](#). FPV are keen to take the fight to HSV and that means 307kW+. Expect up to a possible 320kW output from the FPV models.
- Ford have no known plans to [export the Orion Falcon](#), instead their export efforts will be concentrated on the Focus due to be built locally from 2011.

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The big news with Orion is of course the all-new sheetmetal. Where the outgoing model is a design compromised by its AU bodyshell origins, Orion is a fresh start. We are already seeing elements of Ford's European Kinetic design style in the "bits" of Orion that we can see and the latest pics of the black Typhoon suggest that Ford have a seriously good looker on their hands.

The rear door opening will allow for easier entry and exit and has been dutifully disguised on most of the test mule Orions photographed. If you like the look of [Fords new Mondeo](#) (and who wouldn't?) then prepare to like the Orion as it is expected to be noticeably similar.

I think we are all expecting the Orion to be an accomplished machine. Ford Australia have a knack for producing quality on a tight budget but there are some big question marks hanging over Orion and indeed the very future of an Australian Falcon. The Orion will be the eighth generation of the Falcon range in Australia but without a planned export program and in the face of a market rapidly changing and moving away from large sedans will it be enough?

The good news is that Ford has and is investing in the future of Falcon (and [Focus](#)) with a projected spend of \$1.8 billion over the next decade on engineering and development and that's on top of upgrades to their You Yangs proving ground, a new stamping plant as well as a new research and development centre. Oh, and expect the Falcon after Orion to be "all new" and designed for export.

Images below courtesy of the Australian Ford Forum, you can follow this link to their [Orion Knowledge Hub](#).

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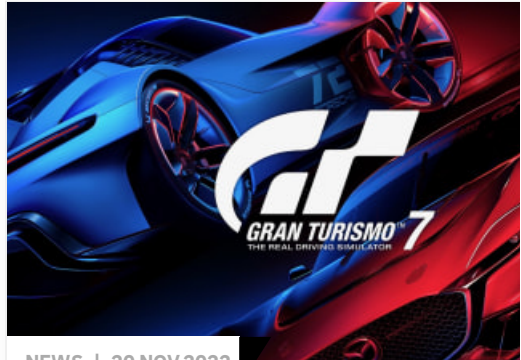
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