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Latest Volvo V60 estate – Road Test

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Sold by Ford eight years ago, Volvo is now under the parentage of the Chinese Geely organisation, but remains autonomous in most ways, and still developing their own Scandinavian innovative design-led models.



The launch of the Volvo XC90, XC60 and more recently the XC40 enabled the brand to capitalise on the demand for SUVs and for good measure they added the V90 imposing large estate and its S90 sports saloon. Prior to that in 2010 they introduced the sports styled first generation V60/S60 estate/saloon range which paved the way for their future models.



Now arrives the V60 five door estates which will be followed later this year by the S60 saloon models. Prices for the V60 start at £31,810 and currently rise to £40,860. At launch there are 2.0 litre petrol and diesel engines. These are the D3 150 hp and D4 190 hp turbodiesels, both with manual and automatic transmission choices, and the T5 250 hp turbo petrol with its standard fit automatic gearbox. All are front wheel drive models. More engines will follow next year including T4 petrol and T6 and T8 Twin Engine plug-in petrol-electric hybrids with all-wheel drive powertrains. Volvo also recently announced that every new car it launched from 2019, regardless of powertrain fuel types, will be electrified.



The choices of V60 specification levels are Momentum, R-Design and Inscription, plus Pro versions for these three core levels. Competitor estate models are the Audi A4 Avant, BMW 3 Series Touring and the Mercedes C-Class Estate.

Although Volvo don't give sales predictions they do say the V60 will be one of their best selling models with 65% of UK sales going to fleet/business customers, hence the current bias at its launch towards providing more diesel engine options, still the favourite fuel for high-mileage users. The expected best selling versions will be the D3 R-Design manual priced at £35,410 and the automatic at £36,960. Benefit-in-Kind company car tax is from £147 a month for a 20% rated tax payer, PCP personal contract purchase over 48 months and PCH personal contract hire costs over 24 months are both from £279 a month.

The V60 uses Volvos own SPA (Scalable Product Architecture), the same as all their other new models and it is built alongside the XC60, V90 and XC90 ranges at Volvo's Gothenburg plant in Sweden. The new V60 is 4,761 mm (15.62 ft) in length, 126 mm (4.96 in) more than the outgoing model, its 1,916 mm (6.29 ft) wide (+17 mm or 0.67 in) and a little lower (-51 mm or 2.01 in) than its predecessor at 1,433 mm (4.70 ft). Giving extra rear seat legroom the wheelbase has been extended by 96 mm to 2,872 mm (9.42 ft). Boot space is claimed to be class-leading at 529 litres (18.68 cu.ft) and with the rear seats folded down to create a flat load floor with no rear sill loading lip the cargo space is 1,441 litres (50.89 cu.ft).

The exterior design continues the striking, powerful and muscular design of the larger V90 estate, it looks a scaled down model in terms of body proportions with a similar front face to all of their other recent new models.

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Inside the same new generation minimalist modern-day Volvo design theme continues. The Sensus 9.0-inch touchscreen control system allows the fascia to be largely free of buttons and switches. A 12.3-inch active digital driver's information screen fills the instrument binnacle. The upholstery, trim and trim inserts varies between the specification levels but



all have a high quality appearance and feel to them.

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My only issues, as always, are with the Sensus operating system. Too many of the main controls and the very comprehensive array of driver support systems, as we move towards autonomous driving, mostly have to be operated via the touchscreen which I don't see as safe-driving or being very user-friendly. In addition to the opening front page of the touchscreen which shows sat-nav, radio, heating and connectivity function selections, scroll across to page two and I counted no less than 21 boxes which need to be opened to fine-tune driving support or convenience functions. The reason I know this is because of the horrible Lane Mitigation aid. It is far too intrusive, too powerful and it really tugged the steering back into lane on any white-lined road even if I was departing that main road into a side junction. It took me ages to find the right control to turn it off and guess what, no handbook because that is incorporated within the Sensus system and has to be viewed via the touchscreen. Just the simple function of changing the temperature, air distribution, selecting air-con, all have to be done via the touchscreen and to make things even worse the touchscreen quite often needed several prods of my finger to get it to operate. In reality some of these changes need to be made whilst driving so that does not promote safe-driving, somewhat at odds with Volvo's long-term stance on road safety.

I got behind the wheel of the new V60 with its D4 190 hp turbodiesel engine and with the Momentum Pro spec level costing £35,060. Although this is the base spec level as far as standard equipment goes it is definitely not short on kit or driving support functions. The spec list is generous and includes such features as the sluggish 9.0-inch portrait centrally positioned touchscreen, Volvo On Call, Sensus sat-nav, Sensus Connect, City Safety with steering support including pedestrian, cyclist and large animal detection, front collision warning with fully automatic emergency braking, lane mitigation, run-off road protection, LED headlights with active high beam, two-zone climate control, power operated tailgate, rear parking sensors, cruise control with speed limiter, hill start assist, 17-inch alloy wheels and 12.3-inch driver's information display.



But as always the test car came with extra cost options including the £500 Convenience Pack with power folding rear seat backs and headrests, the £1,625 Intellisafe Pro system with pilot assist, adaptive cruise control, blind spot monitoring, cross traffic alert and rear collision mitigation. The £1,800 Xenium Pack included a power operated glass tilt and slide sunroof which brightened the rather dark interior, parking camera with 360-degree surround view which was a brilliant addition and park assist for automatic front and parallel parking. Other options included the £825 superb Harmon Kardon sound system, £150 spare wheel and tools, £600 dark tinted windows and powered front passenger seat. All the extra cost options pushed the price of the £35,060 test car up to a hefty £43,235, which increased the £140 Standard rate VED tax up by an additional £310 annual cost for five years as it breaks the £40k barrier. So that's food for thought before getting involved in adding extra cost options.



The 2.0 litre D4, four cylinder turbodiesel engine produces a healthy 190 hp with 400 Nm



(295 lb.ft) of torque from 1,750 rpm. Volvo's own modern 2.0 litre engines are known for their responsive free-revving nature and with the manual gearbox you have to be alert that fifth and sixth gears are of an overdrive nature for fuel efficiency. So for driving on winding country roads, gear changes between fourth and fifth are frequent, and sixth gear is really for only open road cruising. The estate does have four Drive Mode settings; Comfort the default setting for everyday use, Eco for fuel saving – but best used once cruising speed has been reached, Dynamic for those more sporting driving moments and Individual which tailors each element to the driver's own personal taste.

Top speed is an unimportant 137 mph but the zero to 62 mph acceleration time of 7.9 seconds shows it has performance on-tap when required. The new WLTP compliant Combined Cycle fuel economy figure is 61.4 mpg but my week of test driving using all types of roads and traffic conditions was 43.2 mpg, good for an estate of this size but not close to the new and supposedly more accurate industry WLTP test procedure. The CO2 emissions with the six-speed manual gearbox model I tested are 122 g/km so the diesel rate VED First year road tax cost is £205 before the £140 Standard rate is applied but as already described delve into the options list and break the £40k barrier and you can add £310 a year for five years to that figure. Company car drivers will pay 29% Benefit-in-Kind tax. Insurance is Group 34E and warranty is three years/60,000 miles.

Handling is best described as tidy, sure-footed and well balanced rather than agile but it will meet the needs of the majority of drivers rather than a few enthusiastic types.

VERDICT

It's safe, comfortable, roomy, sound and solid, a thoroughly new Volvo estate with the same desirable credentials of Volvo estates past.

For: Spacious for passengers front and rear, ample boot/load space, well-equipped, lots of safety related standard equipment, classy kerb appeal styling, responsive engine, well-balanced handling.



Against: Complicated, difficult and slow Sensus touchscreen system which controls too many most-used functions, real-life fuel economy fell well short of the new official and supposedly more accurate WLTP figure, adding costly options could increase Standard rate road tax costs, ungenerous warranty.



Milestones and Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

Volvo V60 D4 Momentum Pro estate.

Price: £35,060. (£43,235 as tested with options).



Engine/transmission: 2.0 litre, four cylinder, turbodiesel 190 hp, 400 Nm (295 lb.ft) from 1,750 rpm, six speed manual.

Performance: 137 mph, 0-62 mph 7.9 seconds.

Fuel consumption: WLTP Combined Cycle 61.4 mpg (43.2 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 122 g/km, VED diesel First Year road tax £205 then £140 Standard rate but £310 will be added annually to the Standard rate for five years if options push up the price to £40k and above, BiK company car tax 28% with 17-inch standard wheels but 29% with 19-inch ones fitted to the test car.

Insurance Group: 34E.

Warranty: Three years/60,000 miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,761 mm (15.62 ft), W 1,916 mm (6.29 ft), H 1,433 mm (4.70 ft), wheelbase 2,872 mm (9.42 ft), load/boot space 529 to 1,441 litres (18.68 to 50.89 cu.ft), braked towing weight 2,000 kg (4,409 lb).