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Latest Volvo XC60 – Road Test

Published: September 12, 2017

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Online version: <https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/latest-volvo-xc60-road-test/>



New Volvo XC60 mid-sized SUV First Drive.

By David Miles (Miles Better News Agency).

When the first generation mid-sized XC60 was introduced in 2008 it didn't take long for it to become Volvo's best selling model range and the market leader in its class in Europe, as it was just at the time the SUV market overall was beginning to boom in terms of sales.

Today with the introduction of the second generation XC60 the competition is even stronger, with premium brand alternatives such as the Land Rover Discovery Sport, Audi



Q5, BMW X3, Jaguar F-Pace, Mercedes GLC and soon the Range Rover Velar. There are also less costly similar sized alternatives such as the SEAT Ateca, Skoda Kodiaq, Renault Kadjar, VW Tiguan, Nissan Qashqai, Peugeot 3008, Toyota RAV4 and Ford Kuga to name just a few.

The all-new XC60 five-seat SUV is a scaled down version of Volvo's award winning XC90 large 4x4 and it uses similar engines and another version of their scalable architecture platform. It is the first of a new mid-range 60 Series models. It follows Volvo's new premium brand design language inside and out as already seen in the S90 saloon, V90 estate and XC90 seven-seat SUV. It also adopts their latest high level of safety equipment, and autonomous technology connectivity functions. Volvo will shortly introduce the smaller XC40 SUV, the first of their new 40 Series models.

The arrival of the XC60 comes at a cost for UK customers as prices are near £4,000 more than the outgoing versions. The latest generation of 18 models start at £37,205 and rise to £57,950 for the T8 Twin Engine hybrid.



The engine choices are all 2.0 litre, four cylinder turbocharged units plus the petrol-electric plug-in hybrid version. All versions are all-wheel-drive (AWD) and all have an eight-speed automatic gearbox with various driving modes. These are Comfort, Eco, Dynamic, Off-Road and Individual for the diesel and petrol models and the Hybrid has Pure, Power, AWD, Off-Road and Individual. This T8 Twin Engine Hybrid uses a petrol engine driving the front wheels and the electric motor powers the rear wheels.

The range of engines are the D4 190 hp turbodiesel, D5 PowerPulse 235 hp turbodiesel, T5 254 hp turbo petrol and T8 Twin Engine Hybrid with a turbo and supercharged petrol engine plus an 87 hp electric motor with a total power output of 407 hp. CO2 emissions



range from 49 g/km for the Hybrid up to 167 g/km for the T5 petrol. Volvo UK expects the D4 unit to take 53% of sales, D5 25%, T5 10% and T8 hybrid 12%, the latter mostly to company car users because of the low 9% Benefit-in-Kind tax. Other engines with CO2 emissions ranging from 133 to 157 g/km vary from 28 to 32% BiK costs.

The specification levels are Momentum and Momentum Pro available with D4 diesel and T5 petrol engines, R-Design with D4, D5 and T5 engines, R-Design Pro has the same plus the T8 Hybrid option, Inscription with D4, D5 and T5 units and Inscription Pro with all engine options including the Hybrid. When it comes to spec choices Volvo expects 25% of sales for the Momentum and 10% for Momentum Pro, R-Design 30% and R-Design Pro 10%, Inscription 15% and Inscription Pro 10%.

Using these expected sales figures the best selling new XC60 is potentially the D4 R-Design costing £39,705 on-the-road. But the model available for my test drive was the D5 PowerPulse 235 hp turbodiesel unit, but with the best selling R-Design specification which costs £43,205 on-the-road. However it was fitted with lots of extra cost options and option packs which accelerated the price up to a massive £55,980.

That isn't to say that the core XC60 is a poorly specced car. Fitted as standard to every version is a 9-inch centre console tablet style touchscreen, Sensus Navigation and voice control system, Sensus Connect, City Safe with Steer Assist, Oncoming Lane Mitigation, Run-Off Road protection, LED headlights, two-zone climate control, power operated tailgate, 8-inch driver information display, leather faced upholstery, heated front seats, 18-inch alloy wheels and 60/40 split folding rear seat backs. Unfortunately like other premium brands the extras list is long and you even have to pay £300 for Smartphone Integration which includes Apple CarPlay and Android Auto connectivity.

The R-Design spec I tried has as standard additional kit items such as high gloss front grille, 19-inch alloy wheels, dual chrome trimmed exhaust pipes mounted into the lower rear bumper, sports suspension, sports seats, 12.3-inch driver info display screen and metal mesh interior trim inlays. Some of the more expensive extra cost options fitted included the



Xenium Pack at £2,000 for the glass tilt and slide panoramic sunroof, 360-degree parking camera and Park Assist Pilot for automatic parallel and 90-degree parking. At £1,500 the Intellisafe Pro Pack provides Pilot Assist, Adaptive Cruise Control, Blind Spot Information, Cross Traffic Alert and Rear Collision Mitigation. Well worth considering is the Active Four C Chassis £1,500 option with adaptive dampers and electronic air suspension which offsets the firmer ride from the R-Design spec sports suspension. And if an uprated sound system is your thing then the Bowers and Wilkins surround sound option costs an extra £2,500

Styling wise the new XC60 is a well-balanced blend of an elevated estate cum soft SUV and with less aggressive looks than a bulbous hard-core off-roader. Within its overall length of 4,688 mm (15.38 ft) there are curvaceous and sculptured exterior panels, doors which cover the side sills reducing the chances of getting road dirt onto your clothes, a relatively low level but long bonnet, imposing grille flanked by sleek lighting units, large windows and a wide and high opening tailgate. The only downside for six-footers is the lack of headroom through the front doors, caused by the steeply raked front A pillar. Otherwise inside it seems as wide as the larger XC90 but with less legroom for the rear seat passengers. However there is still ample room enough with five passengers with comfortable seats and a large boot with 505 litres (17.83 cu.ft) seats up and 1,432 litres (50.57 cu.ft), rear seats folded. The Hybrid, due to its rear electric motor, has a load capacity of 468 and 1,395 litres (16.53 and 49.26 cu.ft) respectively. The maximum braked towing weight for petrol/diesel models is 2,400 kg (5,291 lb) and the Hybrid can tow up to 2,100 kg (4,630 lb).

This slideshow requires JavaScript.

The front interior is the best of Swedish design, high quality, lots of leather and some top quality vinyl. The fascia is dominated by the vertical tablet style touchscreen and this controls many of the driving aid functions. Unfortunately that includes the heating, ventilation and climate control functions which are not easy, or it could be said - safe - to use whilst driving. Some of the other operations via the touchscreen are fiddly to use as well. There is a long lower centre console between the seats leading to the lower fascia, and it houses useful storage locations plus the electronic handbrake, auto gear lever, the driving



mode selector and starter switch. It's high quality throughout and as good as the likes of Audi who are renowned for their interior designs, but Volvo with the XC60 has the edge as far as driving safety technology goes, even if it costs a lot to have it.



The 2.0 litre D5 PowerPulse turbodiesel engine is one of Volvo's own Drive-E units. Like the lower powered D4 unit it has two turbochargers that work sequentially to provide responsive power at low and high revs. The D5 also uses Volvo's PowerPulse system which injects compressed air from a self generating source stored in a tank in the engine bay. This injects air into the path of the first turbocharger to get it spinning when it would be idle, such as at very low engine revs. This provides for immediate response as soon as you press the accelerator. With 480 Nm (354 lb.ft) of torque from 1,750 rpm the grunt is impressive and provides torque right through a very broad powerband. Top speed is 137 mph and the zero to 62 mph acceleration time is just 7.2 seconds. The eight-speed auto gearbox gives



seamless changes throughout the acceleration range with no 'snatches' between gears during hard acceleration but in ECO mode there is a 'coasting' function to save fuel - but there was a noticeable 'clunk' when it deactivated as the power was applied again. Being an SUV vehicle with AWD as standard the XC60 has a reasonable amount of off-road ability, enough to cope with farm tracks and grassy fields, plus of course added on-road driving traction in mud, ice or snow conditions. The AWD facility is also beneficial for towing duties.



Officially this unit with the R-Design specification will return 51.4 mpg for the Combined



Cycle, but during my week of driving covering urban, rural and motorway driving mostly in ECO mode the real-life figure was a disappointing 36.9 mpg. With CO2 emissions of 144 g/km the First Year VED road tax rate is £200 and then for the Standard rate £140, but as the vehicle costs more than £40k there is the addition £310 a year supplementary annual VED cost for five years from year two onwards. Company car drivers will pay 30% Benefit-in-Kind tax or £381 per month for a 40% taxpayer. Insurance is rated as group 35E and warranty is three years/60,000 miles.

The handling and agility is perhaps not as dynamic as say the BMW or Audi competition in this class but by no means is it sloppy, although it lacked sharp handling response on winding country roads, mainly due to the air suspension. Even with the R-Design sports spec suspension and larger 19-inch wheels the adaptive dampers and air suspension £1,500 option, the car provided a compliant ride for motorway cruising so it's worth having. Although the worst potholes created some impacts felt inside the cabin it was still better than most SUVs in this sector.

VERDICT

Overall the new 2018 model year Volvo XC60 SUV is an impressive and nice to drive piece of kit. But there is a but! It comes with less than impressive prices if you move away from the ample D4 Momentum version and steer clear of the extra cost options. More kit, more power equals more purchase and running costs plus higher taxes.

For: Stylish design inside and out, must-have kerb appeal, roomy, comfortable, high standard spec and safety features, strong engine, wide range of models and options.

Against: Most models are expensive - especially if extra cost options are added, hefty running/tax costs, disappointing real-life fuel economy compared to the official figure, some fiddly to use touchscreen operations.



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

2018 Volvo XC60 D5 PowerPulse, AWD, R-Design mid-sized SUV.

Price: £43,205 (£55,980 as tested).

Engine/transmission: 2.0 litre, four cylinder, twin turbo plus PowerPulse compressed



air injection, 235 hp, 480 Nm (354 lb.ft) of torque from 1,750 rpm, eight speed automatic, AWD. Performance: 137 mph, 0-62 mph 7.2 seconds.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 51.4 mpg, (36.9 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 144 g/km, VED road tax First Year rate £200, Standard rate £140 plus £310 supplement for five years as the vehicle cost is over £40k, Bik company car tax 30%.

Insurance Group: 35E.

Warranty: Three years/60,000 miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,688 mm (15.38 ft), W 1,902 mm (6.24 ft), H 1,658 mm (5.44 ft), boot/load space 505 to 1,432 litres (17.83 to 50.57 cu.ft), braked towing weight 2,400 kg (5,291 lb), five doors/five seats.