

Road Test Volvo XC60 D5 AWD

With Oden on My Side

The Volvo XC60 has had a resurrection like few others. After Thor was done hammering his way around, it was quite a stunning turnaround. Now it's road test time

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CONFIDENCE IS A WONDERFUL THING. IT GIVES A CERTAIN inner glow that reflects boldly and is even absorbed by others around its presence. When intent, commitment, and effort all meet and proceed towards the same end-game, it produces a masterpiece that supersedes others in a big way. The Swedes have been synonymous with Scandinavian design owing to their unique perception. Volvo are synonymous with safety and are also known for many other things: interior design, modern equipment, physio-approved ergonomics, and exceptional attention to detail. All of these come together in the new XC60 like never before. And, dare I say, it gives the driver, yours truly, some seriously questionable over-confidence to attack corners, bends, straights, dips, humps, and you name it. But I'm getting ahead of myself...

The new XC60 has been around for just over a year now, but my time with the name tag goes back a little further, nine years to be precise. It was early 2010 when the first XC60 arrived in India and, back then, it brought in the "revolutionary" technology we see on cars globally today. The list included radar and camera-based autonomous braking and active bending bi-xenon projector headlamps, among many others. The 2.4-litre, in-line five, turbo-diesel engine was equipped with a diesel particulate filter and complied with the Euro 5 emission standard set for implementation from late 2009. Environmental care was, and still is, one of the pillars that Volvo build their vehicles on.

Now, nine years later, the next coming looks good to take them into the new decade. Globally, they've committed to stop offering new diesel vehicles. However, our market is one that loves oil and oil-burners and we get a new twin-turbo diesel-powered XC60 with all of 235 PS and the new Scalable Product Architecture, or SPA platform, that the new large cars are based on.

Visually, nothing has changed since we first drove the car in January last year. However, we needed numbers to back up those good looks and let you know what it feels like with regular use in everyday conditions. So, the XC60, in this fully-loaded "Inscription" trim level, gets the whole hog of kit and all the glittering garnishes on offer from the Iron Mark badge. From what's evident, there's the leather-wrapped smart key that can stay in your pocket or bag; entry, start, and go is all keyless. Then the sheer quality of materials — from the genuine wood trim and aluminium trim accents to the robust-feel plastics and the perforated leather upholstery — just make it feel as premium as can be. The huge centre touchscreen is the dominant feature in the centre console and controls almost every function of the car while displaying everything else that matters as well. The premium sound system also contributes to the mood well when needed. >



[Top] Cabin feels great; quality interior augmented by the panoramic sunroof



The cabin feels much roomier thanks to the huge glass roof as well as the design of the seats. This is because, like the XC90, the XC60 gets the revised seating systems which use a thinner frame that liberates more rear knee-room. The boot volume has also been optimized. The new XC60, compared to the previous car, runs a much wider track — 71 mm more than the previous car — and has the rear wheels spaced out slightly further compared to front wheels, again the opposite of what its predecessor had. Apart from the optimized space, it also adds to the planted feel and makes it more sure-footed than ever. Furthermore, the near countless electronic aids and assistance systems keep it in line in pretty much any scenario where one or more wheels are in contact with the road.

Getting to the actual driving characteristics, the foremost aspect that makes itself clear is the vastly improved sound-deadening that keeps occupants cosseted in inner peace and the cabin in tranquillity. Wind and road noise are almost undetectable and even the noise from bearing traffic is kept to a minimum. The support from the multi-way, power-adjustable seats is fantastic and lets the occupant of the driver's seat really appreciate being in the car. The steering feel is good and feedback is just right. The drive modes also alter the levels of steering feel, making for a more involving drive, and give a feeling of being in complete control.

Should you wish to disconnect for a bit, the adaptive cruise control is one of the easiest to use — and there are choices for both speed and distance. So long as there are lane-markings, the XC60 will even steer itself to stay within those white lines. The ride quality is sublime and a far cry from the rather stiff ride of its predecessor. The double-wishbone front and multi-link rear with air suspension all round makes for exceptional stability and a plush ride. Even at speed, the XC60 feels reassuringly planted and completely unperturbed by any necessary changes of direction. The blind-spot assist lights up in the wing mirrors to assist when an approaching vehicle is detected while overtaking or changing lanes.



(Top) Just remember the Swedes started that beautiful tail-lamp design

(Above) Wood trim with metal accents absolutely stunning to behold

(Below left) Rear occupant room is plentiful and comfort is up a notch

Getting up to speed and staying there is a piece of cake as the XC60 D5 musters up 480 Nm of peak torque from 1,750 rpm. The eight-speed auto box isn't the most urgent but does more than a decent job. Going from zero to 100 km/h takes nine seconds and, on the move, overtaking acceleration is good with 40 to 80 km/h dismissed in just four seconds. Not too bad at all for a 1.9-tonne luxury SUV. Then again, its handling completely belies its size. On the brakes, too, the XC60 sheds speed in a thoroughly undramatic manner. Again, "confidence" seems to be the irrefutable keyword when it comes to its handling under hard acceleration, cornering or braking.

The Volvo XC60, then, captures the essence of Scandinavian values in terms of design, comfort, technology, and a modern, contemporary style. It will take on the rough stuff and dust itself off. It will munch tarmac while pampering its occupants in Swedish luxury. It's a brilliant all-rounder and it has been well-accepted the world over, significantly contributing to Volvo's record sales of 2017 and 2018. Besides, that it was crowned the World Car of the Year 2018, beating some big names in the process, speaks volumes in itself. At Rs 59.90 lakh (ex-showroom), it's well within the ball-park of the big names here, too. It's a sensible car and the amount of thought that's gone into its creation is evident indeed. 

