



Nordic Revolution

Volvo's new XC60 is all the mid-size luxury SUV you'll need

Underdogs tend to punch above their weight. They try that much harder, go the extra mile, just to get noticed. That's what's happening at Volvo these days. The little known Swedish luxury brand has been living in the shadow of the German triumvirate, Audi, BMW and Mercedes, for far too long but it now wants to step into the spotlight. But to do that, it first has to transform itself from a left-field brand, known for its safe, solid but boring cars, to one that is younger, trendier and at the cutting edge of the latest tech, to catch the attention of new age buyers.

That transformation has well and truly begun driven by Volvo's Chinese owners, Geely. The new Volvo XC60 is one of the products of that change. This mid-sized luxury SUV is so far removed from the previous model that it's hard to imagine it has come from the same manufacturer. More importantly, the XC60 has rattled well established rivals by winning a string of accolades including the 2018 World Car of the Year award. So, is it that good then?

SCANDINAVIAN COOL

From the look of it, the XC60 doesn't come across as a typical, in-your-face, imposing SUV but has a chunky, upright stance to give it enough road presence a typical SUV buyer would seek. There's enough bling by way of chrome highlights on the grill, bumpers and side skirts, whilst the L-shaped tail lights are a long standing Volvo signature.

It's the interiors that stand head and shoulders above the competition. The cabin oozes Scandinavian style with its light and airy ambience that feels refreshingly different from other luxury SUVs. The choice of materials is again top class and the unlacquered wood, chrome and black piano finishes are all used to good effect. The highlight of the cabin, though, is the brilliant seats which have long been a Volvo USP. They are superbly sculpted, orthopaedically designed and finished in high-quality leather. The Volvo XC60 offers decent all round space, but is best for four adults though five can be squeezed in. One has to remember that this is a fairly compact SUV and if acres of space is your criterion you need to look elsewhere. Getting into the rear, you'll notice the doors don't open wide enough, which can be inconvenient for elderly people.

The XC60 is sold in only the D5 Inscription trim variant, which is loaded to the gills. It gets ear-blowing Bowers & Wilkins sound system, air-suspension, a heads-up display and headlights that bend, which is useful around corners.

BRACE YOURSELF

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ON THE web

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SHINY AND SAFE

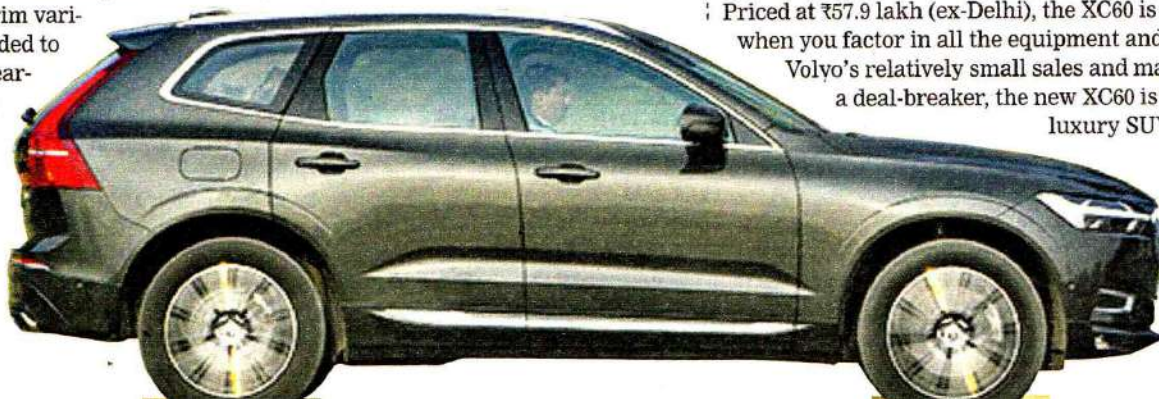
Volvo has built its reputation by building safe cars, so there's no holding back on safety equipment in the XC60. Apart from the six airbags on offer, you get a host of radar-based driver aids that automatically brake or steer the car to avoid a potential accident.

Taking pride of place on dashboard is a 9-inch touchscreen that's almost devoid of hard buttons. Given Volvo's obsession with safety, this stands out as odd because to operate the infotainment system, you have to momentarily take your eyes off the road. The large screen is a fingerprint magnet too and needs to be wiped clean constantly.

The XC60's 2-litre diesel puts out a class best 235hp, so performance expectedly is very good. Put your right foot down and there's a strong build up of power whisking you to shockingly fast speeds without you even noticing it. It's a fairly refined engine but by no means the benchmark and sounds a bit coarse when revved.

While performance is sprightly, the handling really isn't in the same vein. This isn't a very sporty or involving car and 'relaxed' best describes how this Volvo drives.

Volvo's typical customers are a relaxed and chilled out lot, though they must be working hard to afford an XC60! What won't be too hard is finding customers for this car. Priced at ₹57.9 lakh (ex-Delhi), the XC60 is expensive, but when you factor in all the equipment and features, and if Volvo's relatively small sales and marketing team isn't a deal-breaker, the new XC60 is all the mid-size luxury SUV you'll need.



Hormazd Sorabjee is one of the most senior and much loved auto journalists in India, and is editor of Autocar India