

INDULGE VOLVO XC60

ON TOP OF THE WORLD

Volvo recently grabbed the World Car of the Year award for the XC60. If it's that good, we had to drive it

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LOCATION YOO VILLAS BY PANCHSHIL REALTY



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THE FIRST VOLVO I DROVE WAS AN S80. IT WAS incredibly comfortable, had a strong engine and drove like a cushy luxury car. At the time it had the best seats in the business. When you opened the S80, you felt like you were entering the safest place in the world – thick frame and strong thud when the doors closed. I had two main takeaways, comfort and safety. But the S80 was old and Volvo at the time was in serious financial problems. New products were far away and the old ones were just getting facelifts after facelifts to rack up respectable sales numbers. Meanwhile, a lot was brewing in Sweden.

Under the ownership of Geely, Volvo was reinventing itself from its old designs to new ones and parallel to the new designs, the engineering team was developing new engines, the interiors team was burning the midnight oil to make Volvo interiors one of the finest places to be in on four wheels, and all this came together in 2016 with the XC90 and S90 SUV and sedan. The world was shocked at Volvo's new face – sharp, edgy, youthful and filled to the brim with technology. I remember driving the S90 in Southern Spain in the Summer of 2016. It was the successor to the S80 but boy did it feel a



Left: The XC60 is striking from every angle but that rear especially mixes classic Volvo cues in a modern avatar. Below: The Thor Hammer LED DRLs are now a feature on all modern Volvos. Right: Every part is neatly designed, even that key with its buttons on the side

few generations ahead. It was the first time I let a car drive me, instead of the other way around! Volvo's semi-autonomous cruise control system works so well on highways in Europe, it would cruise at 130kmph on highways all while staying in its lane even when the road curved, changed lanes when you use the indicator and never ever put a foot wrong. I enjoyed the Spanish landscape a whole lot more as the car drove me so effortlessly. I figured if there's one car to risk it in, it would be in a Volvo. Not that the S90 is a looker, has a smashing entertainment system and the interior is so tastefully designed with the large tab on the centre console in its unique portrait orientation that every bit about the S90 had Volvo's signature all over it. The cars were designed to have their own identity without being too outlandish.



Why so much about the S90 and XC90? These were not just Volvo flagships but a preview of things to come. The design and technology was already trickling down the food chain in Sweden, and we didn't know then that all that work into making fantastic flagship cars was shaping the World Car of the Year. In 2017, Volvo launched the XC60. It was meant to be the company's midsize SUV so Volvo scaled the XC90 down a bit. That was about all the change they made, or so it seemed at first glance. The XC60 is that good an SUV that it feels almost as luxurious and plush as its elder sibling.

The XC60 carries family design cues that include the Thor's hammer LED DRL in the headlights, the signature Volvo grille, and a similar stance to the XC90's. The rear features similar design elements as well. While the two SUVs look all too similar, the XC60 adds a lot more desirability in the bargain. Even at the fancy Yoo Villas bungalow in Pune where the house in the background costs around Rs 23 crore, the XC60 doesn't look out of place. It's arguably the most expensive looking midsize SUV on the market right now, an aspect that surely has contributed to winning it the World Car of the Year award. It even pipped the Range Rover Velar to the crown due to the bang you get for your buck.

Step inside and the lovely nappa leather seats will make you believe you are in a car far costlier than the XC60's sticker price; the dashboard is made of high quality materials and the large infotainment screen with its sharp graphics works wonderfully to spruce up the cabin even more. The front seats even have a first in class massage program. Volvo has ensured no stone stays unturned when it comes to luxury, especially anything that's in regular touching distance for its occupants.

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SPECIFICATION

Price: ₹55.9 lakh (ex-showroom) | Engine: 4-cylinder, 1.96litre turbo-diesel | Power: 232hp@4000rpm
Torque: 480Nm@1750rpm | 0-100kmph: 7.2sec (claimed) | Top speed: 220kmph (claimed)

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Following the looks and comfort with a good mechanical package was essential so Volvo threw air suspension into the XC60's shopping cart (another segment first), gave it the most powerful diesel engine in its class with 235 horsepower and 480Nm, and tuned it such that it isn't the fastest but the smoothest of motors you will drive. It feels unhurried and maybe, if anything, would have had a stronger midrange but the XC60 doesn't feel slow. The air suspension lowers the SUV at high speeds reducing its body roll considerably and making it a better handler in the process. You won't be hunting apexes in this one; however, body roll on a long journey can wear you down and when you are on highways, better body composure makes a car nice to tour in.

There's little to fault the Volvo honestly. When people talk about cars being complete packages, there are very few that stand up to the challenge and the XC60 is one of them. It doesn't put a foot wrong for the market it caters to. Volvo's CEO Hakan Samuelsson who has led the brand into this new and exciting phase of class leading products deserves the World Car Person of the Year award that was conferred to him at Geneva this year. It may not be just him to have got Volvo to the place it is now but the recognition shows that the world is taking Volvo seriously again. For a company with such a rich history of cars, somewhere along the way, they had lost their calling, but the new products show how Volvo has got back on the right path. The XC40 and the new S60 will be coming in a year's time and you and I can have high expectations from these two cars now. 📌

Top: The interior is a straight lift from the XC90, which is always a good thing. Above, right: The XC60's drive modes can be controlled by this scroll button