

Heavy hitters

The mid-size luxury SUV segment has just been updated with the BMW X3. Can it dethrone the XC60? Or will the rugged and spacious Discovery Sport pull something special out of the hat?



THE CONTENDERS



BMW X3 20d
List price Rs 56.70 lakh.
A comfortable SUV that is good to drive and to be driven around in as well.



Volvo XC60 D5
List price Rs 57.90 lakh.
Feature-packed, powerful and plush, the XC60 offers everything and then some.



Land Rover Discovery Sport HSE
List price Rs 59.24 lakh.
A tough and robust SUV that is high on space and off-road ability.

All prices in Lakhs, Excl. of Tax

SINCE ITS INTRODUCTION in 2017, the Volvo XC60 has taken the fight to every rival and won. Its punchy engine, plush interiors and exhaustive features list are reasons why we've chosen to ignore its weak dealer network. But now, as all champions do, it has to yet again prove its mettle against the new kid on the block - BMW's X3. Also, an SUV that often goes unnoticed in these German / European clashes is the Land Rover Discovery Sport. Yes, it is the oldest of the lot, but it is arguably the best SUV-like of the three, the best off-roader, and, yes, it is also the most spacious with seven seats on offer. So, does the Volvo still reign?

What are they like to drive?
The new BMW X3 is powered

by a 2.0-litre turbo-diesel engine that produces 190hp and with power sent to the wheels via an eight-speed automatic gearbox. Like most BMW diesels, the X3 is refined and quiet. At idle, it is the least noisy of the three, with only a hint of rumble from the engine. Get on the move and the engine is initially sluggish with the turbo slow to respond below 2,000rpm. Push hard on the accelerator and it shoots off, but only after a slight pause. The gearbox is good. In Sport mode, the X3 behaves very differently. There is an immediate change in engine response, as it feels punchy and shuffles through the gears faster as well. 0-100kph is covered in just 8.65sec, 20-80kph in 6.17sec and 40-100kph in 7.59sec.

The paddleshifters, however, are slow to respond. There's also an Eco mode which holds down the power considerably and is best used on long drives. The best mode to use, however, is 'Adaptive' which senses your relaxed driving inputs or urgency and alters

'Discovery Sport might be heavy to drive, but is the only 7-seater here.'

throttle, steering, suspension accordingly. The X3 also is a fantastic drive. The steering feels light at low speed; it weights up nicely as speed builds, and offers the most feel and feedback of the three SUVs here. In corners, you can confidently carry speed thanks to the super setup and all-wheel-drive system. There is a bit of body roll in tight corners and a hint of understeer when you push it a bit too hard, but drive through this and you'll get to enjoy the car in a spirited manner. Ride comfort at city speeds is impressive, as the X3 glides over broken roads and potholes. It is the softest in Comfort mode, but tends to wallow at high speeds on highway undulations. At triple-digit speeds, it is best then to have that little firmness from

the Sport mode. Brakes are strong too and have a good bite to them.

The XC60 is the most powerful here boasting a 235hp, 2.0-litre turbo-diesel engine. It gets an eight-speed automatic transmission with an all-wheel-drive system. In terms of refinement, it is a tad louder than the X3 and the clatter is a bit more evident once you're on the move.

The highlight, however, is instant performance. It pulls strongly right from when you hit the throttle, all the way up to the redline at 4,400rpm. There is almost no lag due to the electrical assist the turbo gets, and so, naturally, it is the fastest SUV here with a 0-100kph time of 8.36sec. It is the quickest when you accelerate hard from 20-

80kph with a time of 5.11sec or 40-100kph in 6.41sec. Also, like the BMW, the XC60 gets drive modes that can be used for performance, efficiency, comfort and an additional off-road mode for when you want to tackle ruts and B-roads, but here the difference isn't as pronounced.

It is also the only one here with air suspension that adjusts according to the drive mode you're in. 'Off-road' is the highest, while Dynamic mode sets the car to its lowest height setting, still, the ride isn't good. Speed bumps and potholes cause the suspension to thump and bump. The upside, however, is that at high speeds, the XC60 feels very stable. Handling at low speeds is impressive as well, as the fluid steering and good engine

response mean you can truly enjoy driving it on city roads. It is not a sporty drive, though. The handling is soggy, the steering feels disconnected and the XC60 is often unresponsive - this SUV feels best driven at lower speeds.

The Discovery Sport is a rather unique proposition here. It is a properly tough and no-nonsense SUV and that translates in the way it drives. The 2.0-litre Ingenium diesel engine makes 180hp, which is the least here and is paired to a nine-speed automatic gearbox. Refinement levels at idle are good, but as you get going, the engine noise gets more audible in the cabin. What impresses most, however, is the low-end response. The gears are well spaced out and you always have enough

grunt available when you press down on the accelerator. 0-100kph, however, is a lazy 10.68sec, and a lot of that has to do with the two-tonne-plus weight of this full-size SUV. The suspension is on the firmer side and low-speed ride, as a result, is a bit stiff, but it is excellent over bad roads. The steering too is the heaviest of the three, and this means you need to make an effort at low speeds. The Discovery's party piece, however, is its off-road capability. We are talking proper difficult trails and not just mucky B-roads. The off-road modes, suspension setup and the whole design favours off-roading, and that's a huge plus if you're the type who wouldn't mind getting your car and tyres dirty.

BMW X3 vs Volvo XC60 vs Land Rover Discovery Sport

What are they like inside?

Get in the X3 and it's unmistakably BMW. The cabin looks like the new 5- and 7-series' and the material quality is just as good. The dual-tone dashboard also features metal inserts and wood – all tastefully done. The buttons and switches too are superbly finished and the iDrive system is crisp, smooth and easy to use. However, it does miss out on the popular gesture control that's seen on premium BMW cars. The front seats are broad and comfy with soft cushioning and are electrically controlled, but miss out on lumbar adjustment. In the back, there is good space in terms of legroom and headroom. Also, the seat is spacious enough for three and can also be reclined for

'The X3 has the best ride and handling balance.'

added comfort. You also get a rear climate control and window shades.

Even better on the inside is the Volvo. It just wows you the moment you step in. The tan leather upholstery, along with the tasteful use of chrome, gives the interior a huge lift in terms of premiumness. Add to that piano black inserts on the centre console and a huge panoramic sunroof, and you definitely get your money's worth here. Taking centre stage is the portrait-oriented touchscreen with Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, and, unfortunately, most of the functions like AC controls and audio controls as well. The front seats, although a bit firm and shallow, offer excellent all-round support and are ventilated as well. The highlight, however, is the massage function, which



BMW X3
Has the most comfortable ride of the three.



Wide boot but high loading lip; engine is refined but lacks punch.



Comfy, broad front seats. Rear seat is spacious and comfort excellent.



VOLVO XC60
Stiff low-speed ride but is stable in corners.



Powerful engine makes it the fastest SUV here. Big boot is easy to load too.



Supportive front seats. Rear seat bit cramped and backrest is upright.



LAND ROVER DISCOVERY SPORT
Bumpy ride, but gobbles up bad roads.



Third row can be folded away. Terrain Response aids off-roading.



Front seats bit narrow and firm. Middle row most spacious.

BMW X3 vs Volvo XC60 vs Land Rover Discovery Sport

BMW X3



Dashboard

A mesh of faux wood, silver accents and leather. Feels rich and premium.

Centre console

Typical BMW layout with clean lines, dominated by the iDrive system.

Visibility

Most car-like here, large glass house helps all-round visibility.

VOLVO XC60



Dashboard

Tasteful use of wood and chrome gives the dash a premium character.

Centre console

Unique portrait layout for the touchscreen. Most of the controls are integrated.

Visibility

Dashboard is placed low which gives good visibility and an SUV feel.

LAND ROVER DISCOVERY SPORT



Dashboard

Simple, uncluttered layout. Misses out on a premium touch, but feels robust.

Centre console

Feels dated but very functional. Chunky buttons and knobs are easy to use on the go.

Visibility

High-set seats offer excellent all-round visibility. Feels like a proper SUV.

many are bound to be sold on. Also, the 16-speaker Bowers & Wilkins system is simply brilliant. In the back, what you miss first is the underhigh support and a slightly more reclined angle as you are seated a bit upright. And the cabin in the back feels a bit tight due to the sides of the XC60 that lean in.

The interior of the Discovery Sport is anything but flashy. The dashboard layout is subtle with a simple, clean look, and some of it is covered in soft-touch plastic. The centre console looks a bit dated though, and the overdose of black plastic on the buttons and knob look a bit downmarket too. The infotainment system too is smooth and responsive and very easy to use. For the audiophiles, there is a 16-speaker Meridian audio system which offers a good audio experience. The Volvo's, however, is better. Get in the back and the extra space is evident. Legroom and headroom are excellent and you also get entertainment screens in the front headrests. Where the Discovery Sport has a big advantage is in the availability of a third row. Although it is best suited for small children, it does give the Sport a bit more practicality.

Buying and Owning

The X3 is available in two variants – Expedition and Luxury, priced at Rs 49.99 lakh and Rs 56.70 lakh (ex-showroom, India) respectively. With it you get a standard warranty of two years/ unlimited km, which can be further extended with the BMW service plus packages. The Volvo XC60 is available in a single variant 'Inscription'. Priced at Rs 57.90 lakh you get a fully loaded car with a standard warranty of two years that can be extended up to the fourth year for Rs 1.81 lakh. Lastly, the Discovery here is the most expensive car here, and, like the Volvo, comes in only one trim. The HSE Luxury costs Rs 59.24 lakh. You get a standard warranty

Comparison

Stats, specs and ratings



BMW X3 20d
Luxury Line
List price Rs 56.70 lakh
(ex-showroom, Delhi)

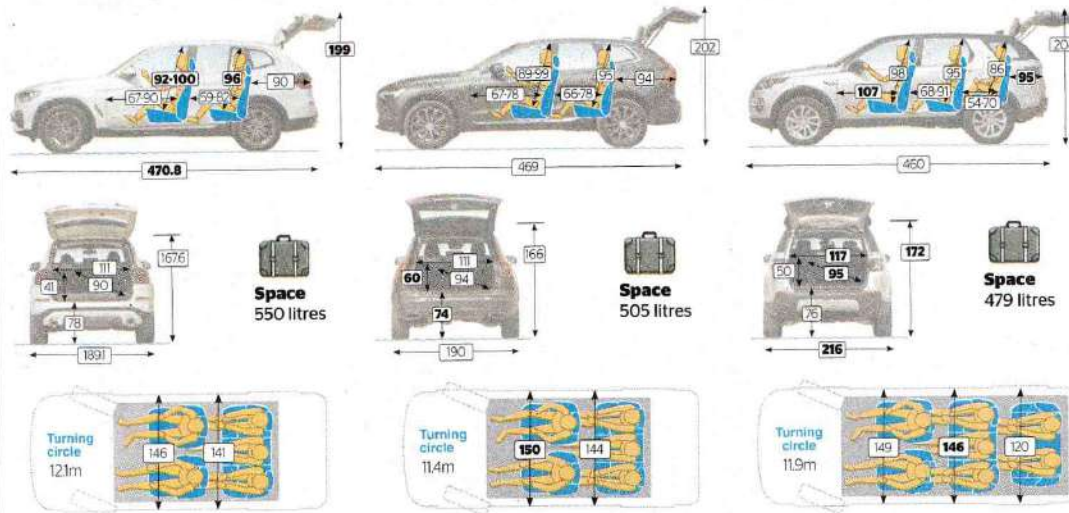


Volvo XC60 D5
Inscription
List price Rs 57.90 lakh
(ex-showroom, Delhi)



Land Rover Discovery Sport
HSE Luxury
List price Rs 59.24 lakh
(ex-showroom, Delhi)

Measurements Figures in **bold** are best in test. Dimensions in cm



Economy



Economy



Economy



Engine and performance

Size 1995cc, 4 cyls
Peak power 190hp at 4000rpm
Peak torque 400Nm at 1750-2500rpm

Engine and performance

Size 1969cc, 4 cyls
Peak power 235hp at 4000rpm
Peak torque 480Nm at 1750-2250rpm

Engine and performance

Size 1999cc, 4 cyls
Peak power 180hp at 4000rpm
Peak torque 430Nm at 1750-2500rpm

0-100kph **8.65** sec
Top speed **213*** kph

0-100kph **8.36** sec
Top speed **230*** kph

0-100kph **10.68** sec
Top speed **188*** kph

Test figures

Acceleration **50-80kph** through the gears

2.93 sec

20-80kph in third gear

6.17 sec

40-100kph in fourth gear

7.59 sec

Braking **80-0kph**

23.80m

Test figures

Acceleration **50-80kph** through the gears

2.85 sec

20-80kph in third gear

5.11 sec

40-100kph in fourth gear

6.41 sec

Braking **80-0kph**

25.49m

Test figures

Acceleration **50-80kph** through the gears

3.97 sec

20-80kph in third gear

6.02 sec

40-100kph in fourth gear

8.61 sec

Braking **80-0kph**

28.20m

Buying details

www.bmw.in

Buying details

www.volvocars.com/in

Buying details

www.landrover.in

of 3 years/ 1,00,000km, which can be further extended up to the fifth year for a premium of Rs 1.29 lakh.

Equipment and Safety

The top-spec Luxury Line trim in the X3 has a strong list of features and tech. You get LED auto headlamps, adaptive dampers, cruise control, driving modes, iDrive with navigation and Apple CarPlay, a 16-speaker Harman-Kardon audio system, front and rear parking sensors, wireless charging and a panoramic sunroof, amongst many others. Safety includes electronics like ABS with brake assist, traction control, cornering assist and six airbags with Isofix tethers. When it comes to features, the Volvo is in a league of its own. You get Active LED headlamps, four-zone climate control, massage seats, cooled and heated seats in the front, Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, panoramic sunroof, genuine leather upholstery for the seats, a 16-speaker Bowers and Wilkins audio system, and auto parking. Safety kit includes radar-based brake assist, semi-autonomous pilot assist, lane keeping assist, front and rear parking sensors with a 360 degree camera as well. You also get Isofix points with six airbags as well. The Discovery – even though the most expensive here – comes with the shortest feature list. You get LED headlamps, touchscreen with navigation, rear camera with parking sensors, auto parking, the off-road centric terrain response and integrated entertainment screens for the second-row passengers. In terms of safety, there's seven airbags with ABS and ESC, hill descent, hill start assist and EBA and EBD as well.

Equipment

	Standard X Not available	Parking camera	Climate control	Apple Carplay Android Auto	Cooled seats	Terrain response	Satellite navigation	Cruise control	LED headlamps	Auto parking	Airbags
BMW X3	✓	✓	3 zone	Apple CarPlay	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	6
Volvo XC60	✓	✓	4 zone	✓	✓	✗	✓	Adaptive	✓	✓	6
LR Discovery Sport	✓	✓	2 zone	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	7

*Claimed. #As tested

OUR VERDICT

1

Volvo XC60
D5 Inscription
★★★★★

For Interior quality, strong engine, long features list
Against Dull handling, weak dealer network
Verdict Still has that edge when it comes to a complete package.



2

BMW X3
20d Luxury Line
★★★★○



For Handling manners, rear-seat comfort
Against Lacklustre engine, some equipment missing
Verdict Good to drive and comfortable as well, but a bit bland in comparison.

3

Land Rover Discovery Sport
HSE Luxury
★★★★○



For Space, off-road prowess, tough build
Against Interior quality, features, ride comfort
Verdict More capable off-roader than luxury SUV.

See how other Compact Xxxx compare in our Buyer's Guide on 73

THE BMW X3 is spacious, comfortable and good to drive. The quality of interiors is high and you get a long list of features as well. The engine, although a bit dull in Comfort mode, works well at speeds and that's what most customers are likely to end up doing. You also have BMW's more established service network and reliability to factor in. The X3 makes

'The XC60 feels the most luxurious, and hence is the best option here.'

for a sound choice when you consider all this. The Discovery Sport, on the other hand, falls behind slightly in this company. While it does the SUV bit best, it fails to impress in the luxury department. The engine too feels dated and drab in comparison and the premium appeal isn't there. In the cabin, it is the Volvo that impresses the most, and does everything right. It is

comfortable to drive at low speeds, the cabin looks, feels and is equipped like an SUV from a segment above. Yes, the low-speed ride is stiff, it isn't as nice to drive at speed as the BMW, and the Land Rover will leave it standing if you go off-road, but its strengths are so well suited to what luxury buyers want, it still manages to hold onto its position at the top of the segment.