Volvo XC60 – Road Test

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Author: Keith Ward

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Keith Ward puts Volvo's latest compact SUV through its paces...

VOLVO's original XC60 compact SUV sold nearly 1m around the world in its nine-year production run, claims to be currently the best-selling premium mid-sized SUV in Europe, and attracts as many as 30 per cent of the Swedish brand's customers.

Thus this second generation version, new for 2017, commands interest. It reflects Volvo's aspiration to now mingle with the posh "premium" boys of the auto world, such as Mercedes, BMW, Audi and Jaguar-Land Rover.

And it tends to emulate their, what could be called, Xmas tree marketing ploy: start with the entry-level car, however sophisticated, and be tempted to decorate it with a glittering array of baubles from a lengthy list of options and packages.

It must be said that entry level of the XC60 is hardly bare of goodies. Sat-nav, climate control, leather-faced upholstery, power tailgate and heated front seats are standard. So are safety items such as lane-keeping and collision avoidance. Also voice instruction if you feel the prod, swipe and scroll of the infotainment screen gets to be a bind, if not a distraction.

In an 18-strong range, priced between £37,000 and £58,000, the XC60 offers three levels of trim – Momentum, R-Design and Inscription, each with a Pro enhancement package aimed at company car drivers. That package features Volvo's On Call service, giving help in an emergency and the facility of controlling various functions of the car remotely via your smartphone or smartwatch.

Our D4 AWD Momentum Pro test car, available near the bottom of the range at £39,000,

topped £50,000 when it arrived hung with its baubles – some of them highly desirable, such as the surround-view parking camera and automatic hands-off parking, allied to a power sunroof in a £2,000 Xenium pack.

True to Volvo's safety image, a £1,500 Intellisafe Pro package, including blind spot warning, cross traffic alert when reversing, adaptive cruise control to keep your distance and rear collision protection, you might consider worthwhile.

Extra comfort items took in such as power folding rear seats and headrests, climate control stretching to four zones instead of two, an enlarged 12.3 -inch tablet-sized info screen on the dash and, at £2,500 to you, surround-sound audio.

On the road, adaptive dampers with selectable firmness together with electronic air suspension (£1,500) doubtless contributed to the XC60's comfortable ride, appreciated on several long-distance drives.

The quality comfort factor is indeed high in the XC60's cabin – plump, supportive seats with generous leg and shoulder room for five adults. (It is built on the same basic platform as the longer and marginally wider XC90). You sit high with a commanding view. The rear seats fold into a flat boot floor extending to more than five feet (1,530 mm) on our tape.

Engine choice is two diesel, one petrol and one petrol-electric hybrid, all with eight-speed automatic transmission and self-selecting all-wheel-drive as standard. The least powerful but established 190 hp D4 diesel we drove was expected from the outset to attract over half of all XC60 customers, but that was before the general UK market dip in sales of diesels, currently recorded at nearly 30 per cent.

This engine is the least powerful of the range, can occasionally growl or hesitate before responding to the automatic box and has to haul a hefty 1,800-plus kg (nearly 4,000 lb). Actual claimed performance figures are not bad (0-60 in under eight seconds). But mpg in our hands at under 37 disappointing, against an official combined rating of over 55.

Volvo sales in the UK last year (2016) were at a 25-year high. In the first 10 months of 2017

they were down 2.54 per cent, so doing better than the 4.55 per cent slump here for all makes. Volvo global sales are up 8.6 per cent on the previous, record, year.

VERDICT

Nice one, Volvo.

Coming up next: The new Volvo XC40 compact SUV is now available to order in the UK, with on-the-road prices starting at £27,905 and first deliveries in the first quarter of 2018.

Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

Volvo XC60 D4 AWD Momentum Pro

Type: Mid-size SUV; five seats; five doors
Size: Length 4,688 mm (15.38 ft); width 1.999 mm (6.56 ft); height 1,658 mm (5.44 ft).
Weights: Kerb 1,802 kg (3,973 lb); max payload 664 kg (1,464 lb); max tow braked 2,400 kg (5,291 kg).
Boot: Vol 505 to 1,432 litres (17.83 to 50.57 cu.ft); deck length 960 to 1,530 mm (3.15 to 5.02 cu.ft); width 1,100 mm (3.61 ft).

Engine: Diesel; 1,969 cc; four cyl; twin turbo; eight speed auto; 4WD; stop-start.

Power: 190 hp @ 4,250 rpm; max torque 400 Nm @ 1,750 – 2,500 rpm Pace 127 mph; 0-60 in 7.9 secs.

MPG: On test 36.4; official combined 55.4; tank 60 litres (13.20 imperial gallons).
Emissions and taxation: CO2 133 g/km; Euro VI; Tax £200 then £140 per year; BIK 28%.

Tyres: 235/60 on 18-inch alloys.

Insurance Group: 31E.

Warranty: 36 months/60,000 miles; 36 months paintwork; 12 years anti-rust.

PRICE: £39,005; as tested with options £50,230.
Rivals: Audi Q5; BMW X3; Range Rover Velar; Land Rover Discovery Sport; VW Touareg; Jaguar F-Pace; Mercedes-Benz GLC.