



Test drive: Volvo XC60

Volvo XC60 - **It's not a game changer, but it's quite the player.**



There's an established hierarchy in the luxury SUV segment. The Q7, Cayenne and Evoque find themselves at the top of this megalomaniacal pyramid. Just below is a promising range of SUVs, which are the reachers – not quite at the top yet, but not too low down the order to kowtow to those above. Among them is the new Volvo XC 60.

First impressions are that this SUV, although tall, has a bonnet that slopes gently, giving it a luxurious rather than the belligerent look that many SUVs tend to favour. The flip side is that at 9.1-inches off the ground, you might often find the apex of a tall speed breaker.

Step into the cabin and you've got all the luxury you really require. A wood-finished centre flowing console with easy to navigate buttons, steering-mounted ones too, tastefully designed beige and black interiors, and a sun roof and leather seats to go along. The seats, designed by the towering

Scandinavians, are so large that if you're below 5 feet 10 inches, you'll feel like a midget sitting in them. Thankfully the front seats are powered, so you don't have to go pulling and pushing with all your might to get them into position. Disappointingly, lumbar support is provided by a tacky manual knob along the side of the seat. The legroom in the rear seats is surprisingly sparse, but you'll soon forget about it as you busy yourself with watching Take One – the documentary on Swedish House Mafia – on the screen built into the headrests of the front seats.

The ride quality on the Summum variant we test drove is anything but disappointing. Yes, it's got the diesel clatter that's still loud, even with your windows rolled up. But you'd expect that given that it features a new D3 five-cylinder turbodiesel unit that guides 163 ponies to their destination and redlines at 3,500 rpm. On the way to the red zone, it's got a lovely growl that reminds you of an XKR. Blip the throttle and the acceleration through the six-speed automatic transmission comes in short, violent and explosive bursts of torque. We're quite sure you're never about to use all of the 400Nm of torque available. But on the expressway when you're near that limit, you'll feel nearly negligible body roll on this SUV which holds the line perfectly even through the long bends.

The steering, as was the case with the S60 we reviewed recently (read the Volvo S 60 review here), is heavy and will leave you wrestling with it at all times. It also picks up way too much feedback. You'll feel every uneven patch on the road that your wheels encounter, first on your palms and then on your buttocks.

The XC 60 is probably one of the worst cars in which to commit suicide-by-car crash. Eight airbags, ABS, DSTC will all come to your rescue in your hour of need. But the most nifty of all these is the Driver Alert Control. Over the speed of 65 kmph, it uses data from the digital cameras and sensors built into the front and rear bumpers, couples that with data gathered through steering wheel movements, and will give you an audio warning if it detects sudden erratic behaviour. The A-frames are neatly lined so as not to restrict visibility, something that the XUV 500 (read the Mahindra XUV 500 review here) could take a cue from.

In terms of road presence, the XC 60 delivers the usual SUV-driving buzz; you're tempted to drive errant two wheelers to their destination atop your bonnet and threaten cocky autorickshaw-wallahs who think of driving as a contact sport. At approximately Rs 35-38 lakhs, it isn't about to be an impulse buy. Rest assured, given its average of 15 kmpl and a purchase point that doesn't shock you, it might just have what it takes to climb up a few spots on that SUV pecking order.

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