



Volvo S60

The art of seduction

Car review | First Volvo showed a sensationally good-looking prototype. Even non-Volvo drivers were planning to switch to Volvo after seeing this beauty. After that the rumours started. The newest S60 was supposedly the most sporty and safest Volvo ever. Now it is finally time for an objective test drive. Does the S60 meet the great expectations?

Every seduction starts with appearance. The curvy lines of a coupe and muscular rear of a sports car perfectly trigger the urges of every car enthusiast.

Only the front doesn't convince at first glance. The somewhat sad look doesn't come close to the elegant, self-assured look of the prototype. Luckily the special golden brown colour ("Vibrant Copper") of the prototype is also available on the production model; it gives the S60 a sporty yet chic look.

Interior

True beauty is more than skin deep and that is certainly the case with a Volvo. The interior of a German car is often so clean that it lacks character. The atmosphere inside the cabin of the S60 is both businesslike and warm. The build quality is much better than before, making the S60 even more of an alternative for its German rivals. Regrettably the original materials and daring upholstery from the smaller Volvo's is not available on the S60; according to the manufacturer the S60 customer has a more conservative taste.



Volvo also distinguishes itself by high-quality audio systems. For the S60 Volvo chose another supplier for the loudspeakers and electronics. This has greatly improved user-friendliness of the satnav and radio. However, the sound quality of the radio/CD-player has deteriorated. The "Premium Audio System" still sounds very good, but it is no longer the absolute best on the market.

Safety

As mentioned before, the new Volvo S60 is rumoured to be the safest ever. To achieve this the car is fitted with all safety systems from the other models. Examples are: adaptive cruise control (automatically keep a safe distance from the car in front), blind spot alert, fatigue- and sleep-related support (keep the driver alert) and a lane departure warning.

Completely new for the S60 is "Pedestrian Detection". With this the car is able to automatically brake for pedestrians. Other brands also offer systems that look ahead, but only gently hit the brakes to reduce the damage. This is because car makers should be very sure that braking is necessary, otherwise it will cause more trouble than it prevents. Therefore, Volvo uses both a camera that can distinguish humans from other objects, and a radar.



On top of that, other requirements should be met. When the accelerator hasn't been moved for a while and the brake pedal hasn't been used, the computer concludes that the driver isn't paying attention. Only in this case is the driver warned when a pedestrian is in the path of the car. At that moment a flashing red light that reflects in the windscreen will alert the driver. If the driver still doesn't react, the computer will eventually brake automatically.

A demonstration of "Pedestrian Detection" is as scary as it is convincing. Because the electronics give the driver all possible chances to brake themselves, the car

will only perform an emergency stop in the last possible moment. Then the pedestrian (in this case a dummy) is uncomfortably close to the bonnet. The test also proves that even if the system is necessary once, the driver will be thankful for "Pedestrian Detection" for life.

Diesel

The fact that the S60 is the safest Volvo so far, is obvious. But how about the promised sportiness? That strongly depends on the chosen engine. The "D3" is not the most powerful on the price list, but it is the most lively. Thanks to the short first and second gear, the S60 D3 is spritely from the start. At high speed the torque-strong engine (400 Nm) makes this-mid range diesel perform with ease.

While modern diesel engines from other brands perform even at low revs, the D3 doesn't. The D3 needs to be revved, because it has trouble accelerating from very low engine speeds. It is therefore very tempting to drive fast with the S60 D3.



When giving in to this seduction, the D3 uses 9 litres of diesel per 100 km. When driving slower, the car needs 6.3 litres to cover 100 km. For now a stop-start mechanism or even a shift-indicator is not available.



D5

For comparison, the strongest diesel engine has also been tested. The "D5" is undoubtedly more powerful and makes the car feel mightier. However, the D5 is less eager to perform and therefore not necessarily sportier. In daily traffic the extra power can hardly be utilised; that only comes in handy on the German Autobahn.

Petrol

On paper, the "2.0T" petrol engine is much faster than the D3 but it doesn't feel quicker. The lower torque (300 Nm) makes the engine less convincing on the highway. However, the 2.0 litre turbo engine is the most quiet engine. While the diesel engines can be heard in the background, the 2.0T is almost inaudible. Despite the chosen engine, noises from the tyres or wind are always minimal.

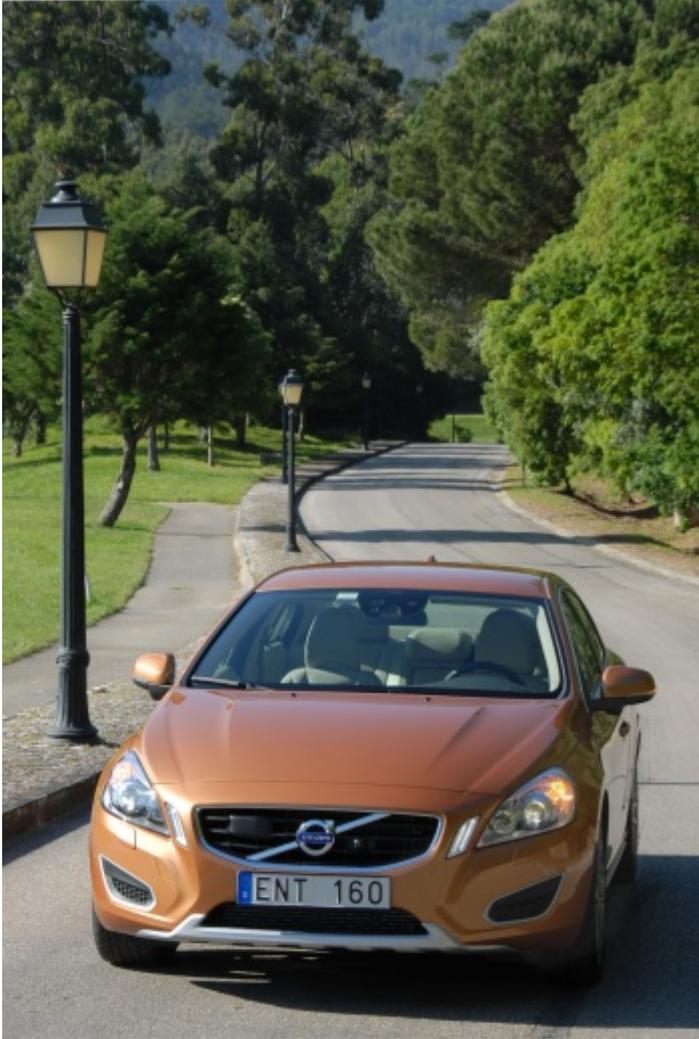


Roadholding

The last seduction the S60 has to offer is its handling. From a technical point of view the S60 is based on the larger S80. The platform has been shortened and all parts that could easily be altered (springs / dampers) have a sportier setting. The S60 hardly tilts over in tight corners. At the same time the suspension isn't so firm that it becomes uncomfortable.

Steering is more direct than average in this segment, making the S60 feel smaller than it actually is. To apply to different tastes the power steering can be set to light, medium and heavy.

The effect of these settings is most obvious with the S60 D3, because this is fitted with electro-hydraulic power steering. The petrol engines (from Ford) use mere hydrolic steering, which is harder to fine-tune.



indeed more sporty and lively than usual. But compared to the competition, handling is no more than average.

The result is that the S60 now comes closer than its German rivals than ever before. At the same time the Swedish character (design and safety) has gotten stronger, making the S60 a very seductive offer indeed. ■

Finally, Volvo made an unusual choice: the anti-skid system doesn't kick in late in order to make the driver feel like a hero. Instead it kicks in extremely early so it feels like the car simply cannot skid. This gives an almost invincible feeling and that completes the seduction.

Conclusion

Volvo carefully built up the tension. After more than a year of waiting, the new Volvo S60 has finally been tested. The promised new safety features certainly proved their use during this test drive. As promised, build quality is better than before.

The sporty character is less convincing. Compared to other Volvo's, roadholding and engine response is



Specifications

Volvo S60 D3 SE Lux Premium

Size and weight

Length x width x height	463 x 187 x 148 cm
Wheelbase	278 cm
Kerb weight	1.482 kg
Trailer	750 kg
Trailer - braked	1.600 kg
Fuel capacity	68 l
Luggage space	380 l
Tyre size	215/50R17

Engine and performance



Capacity	1984 cc
Cylinders / valves	5/4
Max power	163 PS @ 3000 rpm
Max torque	400 Nm @ 1500 rpm
Drive	front wheels
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	9.2 secs
Top speed	220 km/h
Average mileage	5.1 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	INF l / 100 km
Mileage extra urban	INF l / 100 km
CO2 emissions	134 gr / km

Price

Price	Â£ 28,345
Price base model	Â£ 23,295