

A good sense of purpose

By Joe Sage

The Volvo XC60's Monroney sticker identifies it not as an SUV, nor a crossover, but as a "special purpose vehicle." We actually found it to be a very desirable any-purpose vehicle—which is supported by its status as a finalist in the Active Lifestyle Vehicle Awards, in the Luxury On-Road category (see news elsewhere in this issue). Our logbook noted that although Volvo has a great lineup, if they had just one vehicle, this could be it.

The 3-liter twin-scroll turbo gives this smallish vehicle 300 hp and 325 lb-ft of torque to work with. This combination provides fuel mileage ratings of 17/23 MPG city/highway (20 combined), while earning a ULEV II ultra-low emissions rating.

The simplest XC60 starts at \$34,350, while a top-level R-Design T6 AWD starts at \$44,850. Our test XC60 came

with the T6 turbo and AWD, carrying a base of \$40,650, and its Platinum top trim level added \$4600. (On the base model, the add-ons for three trim levels range from \$2950 to \$7550 for the same Platinum.) With a few more options (see sidebar), ours climbed toward \$50,000.

That moves it beyond big brother XC90's base price of \$39,700, though with similar options, an XC90 would still total about \$4000 more than our Platinum XC60. Fuel mileage is about the same, so you can choose between the two almost purely by size, moreso than by budget.

Good times behind the wheel

The XC60's modest size and decent power suggest a spirited drive, and we largely enjoyed our time behind the wheel. The vehicle had no trouble providing some feel-good moments in aggressive traffic, with our logbook repeatedly noting that it had the power we need-

ed, when we needed it.

We did note the suspension was a bit floaty at times on low speed, straight, paved neighborhood runs.

Driving out of the northeast Valley on Seven Springs Road, with its hills, dales, curves and switchbacks, we were quite happy with the automatic's shift patterns. We took the XC60 on some rough roads indeed, and traction held superbly—as it did on any combination of gravel, dirt, smooth pavement, rough pavement or sand we encountered during our week.

XC60 controls and ergonomics

Our XC60 arrived with just 574 miles on it (and smelling strongly of fresh adhesives and such—brand new for better or worse). Typically for Volvo, the XC60 is ergonomically friendly and user friendly—it's relatively quick and easy to find where all controls are and what they do. We did find the side view mirrors were hard to adjust, basically requiring three finger-functions in a two-finger space, and the inside mirror stayed dim during the day.

Button and knob functions are increasingly well integrated with screen functions (though proximity among all could be improved). Audio settings were easy to handle, though climate and audio knobs are easily confused in a blind reach. A transparent cap on the shift lever is stylish but makes the shift pattern illegible in bright sun-

light. The liftgate has useful power descent. The XC60's backup camera is tops, including a small simulated top view of the vehicle along the right side, with a graphic display of any corner sensors picking up any obstacles, forward or back. At times, though, a powerful alarm alerted us unnecessarily of such things as the curb we had pulled in to when we parked.

We never were able to find a sync setting for driver and passenger temperatures. The manual does specify that separate temperatures can be set, as we could see, but makes no mention of a unified setting, as we desired. Nor could we find any information deep within the My Car screen database. It's not intuitive, and if it's there, it's buried.

On our quasi-off-road experience, we hit our limits—traction was fine, but width was getting into goat territory—and had to back down a long, cliffhanging distance. A huge back window plus generally high rear visibility all around were of great help.

A comfortable companion

The XC60 has attractive and dynamic sheetmetal, with a fluidity that mitigates any lingering Volvo boxiness—though it has enough to be highly functional and useful.

By halfway through our week, all details and any quibbles aside, we noted that for easy companionship, decent power, maneuverability and utility, this fills the bill. It's the right size and shape, in an attractive package. Unless you know you need higher fuel mileage than this, the Volvo XC60 belongs on your short list. ■



SPECIFICATIONS

2013 VOLVO XC60 T6 AWD

ENGINE3.0L 6-cyl CVT twin-scroll turbo
 POWER/TORQUE300 hp / 325 lb-ft
 TRANS/DRIVE6-spd Geartronic, AWD
 MPG (EST).....17/23/20 city/hwy/comb
 PARTS ORIGINEngine UK, transmission Japan, other parts US 1%, Belgium 25%, Germany 20%
 ASSEMBLYBelgium
 WARRANTY48 mo / 50,000 mi
144 mo / unlim mi corrosion



SUSPENSION-BRAKES

- Front independent struts, anti-dive
- Dynamic stability traction control
- Roll stability control
- Power rack and pinion steering
- Ventilated disc brakes w/ ABS
- Electronic brake distribution/assistance
- Ready alert brakes

AUDIO: 4x40-watt amps, 8 spkrs, in-dash 1xCD, WMA/MP3 capability and USB/AUX inputs, HD radio, Sirius satellite 6 months free, illuminated steering wheel controls

SAFETY-SECURITY: City safety system, five 3-point belts with addtl features, unibody high-strength steel safety cage, airbags galore, whiplash protection system, five padded head restraints, adaptive steering column, Safe Approach and Home Safe perimeter lighting, intelligent driver info system, back-up battery for security system, rear foglight, rear child locks, TPM.

LUXURY-TECHNOLOGY: 7-inch LCD display, leather seats and steering wheel, pano roof w/ power sunshade, 8-way power for both front seats w/ 3-way memory for driver, keyless drive, trunk release, panic alarm, dual zone climate, Bluetooth phone w/ audio streaming, heated mirrors, integrated roof rails, 40/20/40 flat-folding rear seats, flat-folding front passenger seat and more.

BASE.....\$40,650

XC60 PLATINUM TRIM LEVEL

Nav, rear camera, Volvo premium sound, power tailgate, grocery holder, front/rear park assist, digital compass, electric folding rear headrests, cargo cover, 12V outlets in rear cargo, HomeLink, xenon headlights.....\$4600

- Climate package: heated front/rear seats and windshield washer, interior air quality system\$900
- Metallic paint.....\$550
- 18" FENRIR alloy wheels\$750
- Destination\$895

TOTAL.....\$48,345