

VOLVO V40 Diesel

By Jim Mc Cauley



Volvo has refreshed its top seller here by updating the successful and appealing V40 range. Marketed as a five-door hatchback, the sleek body tends towards estate looks, but stops short of offering the additional space. In a world of increasing anonymity in car design where often only the detailing separates the brands, Volvo maintains a unique presence in their immediately recognisable vehicles.

Although there is a wide choice of both petrol and diesel power units, it was two diesel versions that were driven at the new models' UK introduction. The D2 and D4 sit either side of

the mid range D3 in terms of output from the 2.0 litre turbo engines. The 120hp D2 is the most popular engine in the range, accounting for 51% of total sales and offers quality competition against the likes of the German trio of Audi A3, BMW 1Series and Volkswagen Golf.

In the V40 D2, the 2.0 litre engine asserts its diesel presence from starting up although it eases its cabin intrusion on the open road. It may not offer the refinement of the latest generation VAG two-litres, but accept that it is a diesel and enjoy the performance. This model has a given 0-60mph time of 9.8 seconds with a potential top speed of 118mph. Power delivery is progressive through the 6-speed manual gearbox, although a defined platform of revs must be reached on take-off to prevent stalling. Clutch is also a little on the heavy side compared to the lighter feel of the other controls, including the steering.

Historic associations with Ford provide the car with further developed Focus underpinnings and this chassis displays its excellent heritage on-road. The car is secure and solid, yet responds readily to steering input while a relatively firm suspension set-up provides good cornering support, if a little too communicative to the occupants on irregular road surfaces. But



this does not distract from the appeal of the car which offers a tasteful alternative choice to the Teutonic options mentioned above.



Like the exterior, the cabin of the Volvo V40 offers clean flowing lines on the dash layout with extremely comfortable and supportive seats for the front seat occupants. Overall cabin space is good with clear rear access, while the boot will accommodate 324 litres.

Instruments are clearly presented with a central analogue speedometer with duplicated digital read-out, while the central 'floating' console contains the familiar Volvo graphics for air conditioning controls.

For those who require extra power, the range topping diesel is the 190hp D4, in the case of the test vehicle driving through an 8-speed automatic transmission. Benchmark acceleration from rest to 60mph for this model is an extremely brisk 6.8 seconds while top speed stretches to a potential 143mph. The automatic gearbox dramatically increases the appeal of the car with its seamless response and optional manual override if required.

But both engine options offer excellent economy and low emissions. The D2 model has an official combined fuel consumption of 84.1mpg and with a CO2 emissions of just 89gms/km is in Band A for zero annual road tax. The more powerful 2.0 litre in the D4 returns an official 67.3mpg on the combined cycle and while it has a marginally higher CO2 figure of 109gms/km, it retains a zero annual road tax rating in Band B.

Volvo is synonymous with safety and it comes as no surprise to see that standard equipment on all models features seven cabin airbags including a driver's knee unit, and an external pedestrian airbag designed to prevent contact with upper bodywork in the event of an accident. Also standard are LED headlights for improved night-time visibility, hands-free Bluetooth connectivity, hill start assist and 'City Safety'. This technology is designed to prevent collisions with the car in front and will automatically brake, failing an appropriate response by the driver, at speeds of up to 31mph. Additional safety packages are available as extras including BLIS – the blind spot information system that alerts the driver of approaching vehicles on both sides of the car, and an extension to the 'City Safety' technology that further responds to pedestrians and cyclists.





Overall, Volvo has a model range that can comfortably challenge the competition in vehicles that offer a wide engine choice as well as sensibly graded specification levels. All models carry a 5-star EuroNCAP safety award with insurance cover starting in Group 19. The D2 model tested is listed at £22,000, while the D4 model in 'Inscription' trim is listed at £27,400. All cars are covered by Volvo's comprehensive 3-year / 60,000 mile warranty.

(Driven July 2016)