

VOLVO S60 D5

Choosing a new towcar has never been tougher - there are so many great vehicles to choose from, plus there's Volvo!

By Godfrey Castle

AUTOMATIC

Under normal circumstances a Volvo would not enter my mind as a potential towcar, as this brand has such a low presence in the marketplace that it would be a case of "out of sight, out of mind" for me.

One thing's for sure, though - if I'd opted for one of the top three German brands and then stumbled upon an opportunity to drive the Volvo S60 diesel, I would be very unhappy, for the simple reason that the S60 D5 is an impressive car and towcar.

I must point out that the S60 is the only Volvo we have driven; it's the biggest vehicle in the Volvo range with a transverse 2.4-litre, four cylinder engine driving the front wheels, and the D5 denotes that it is turbo-diesel powered.

Open road stability

Generally big cars make better towcars, not only due to the fact that they have larger engines and more overall body weight, but because they have a wide footprint or wheelbase when it comes to stability.

This is a factor immediately apparent with this car: it feels above average in towing stability, but this could also be put down to the fact that the D5 comes standard with low-profile tyres.

If there's a down side to big towcars, it would probably be fuel consumption, especially when towing, but in the interest of promoting low fuel consumption, the S60 is equipped with a digital fuel consumption meter. You know instantly if you are driving too hard and abusing that turbo charger, and when your subconscious kicks in to tell you that you need to be a scrooge with the go-fast juice, you can immediately back off and start saving those cents.

Not that the Volvo D5 engine is a gas guzzler. Fuel economy alone on the D5 would put this vehicle high up on my purchase order. This vehicle set a new record for us at Caravan and Outdoor Life in terms of fuel consumption - it arrived with a full tank and went back 10 days later still with the regulatory quarter tank left!

Yes, fuel consumption proved to be between 7.8 and 9 l/100 solo, which increased to 9.4 l/100 km towing at a steady 80 km/h and 10.7 at a steady 100 km/h. Remarkable!





The focus is on driver comfort and convenience – the front seat is electrically adjustable and very comfortable for long trips, and the steering wheel has controls for audio as well as cruise control.

Performance

The 2.4-litre diesel engine delivers 136 kW at 4 020 r/min and 400 N.m. of torque at 4 000 r/min. It's quick for a car of this size and engine capacity. From standstill to 100 km/h it takes 12.24 seconds with a 1 100 kg caravan hooked onto the rear! During hard acceleration the engine noise transforms from a pleasantly quiet diesel to a throaty roar, a fact that

Specifications

Volvo S60 D5 towing Gypsy Rascal GVM 1 100kg

ENGINE Diesel

Cylinders/cap	5 / 2 400 cm ³
Power I.S.O. (kW/revs)	136@ 4 020
Torque (Nm/revs)	400@ 1 980

TRANSMISSION

Shift type	automatic
Drive wheels	front

ACCELERATION (seconds)

0-60 km/h	6.22 sec
0-80 km/h	9.05
0-100 km/h	12.24
Top speed towing	147 km/h

HILL CLIMB

200 m climb over 2 km	1 min 24 sec
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OVERTAKING ABILITY

60-80 km/h	3.91 sec
80-100 km/h	4.34 sec
100-120 km/h	7.35 sec

BRAKING

60-0 km/h	2.3 sec
100-0 km/h	3.00 sec

TOWBALL HEIGHT

Towball height	4 800 mm
Towball height with caravan	420 mm

FUEL CONSUMPTION

100 km/h	10.7l/100 km
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probably impressed the younger staff members (it did me!).

Tail drop

Volvo supply their own factory-branded, detachable, goose-neck-type towbar, which can be removed and kept in the boot when not towing.

We did note that there was a considerable drop in the suspension when hitching up the caravan; the towball height dropped from 480 to 420 mm - that's a drop of some 60 mm - yet it ends up at a perfect height for the caravan. This overall drop produces a small ride bump when towing, but again this might be as a result of low-profile tyres and the amount of spring travel consumed by the weight of the caravan.

Good news is that the Volvo S60 D5 can also be fitted with self-levelling suspension but this was not really necessary with the Gypsy Rascal.

Tips on towing with Volvo automatic

When a motor company goes to the length of including towing caravans in their handbook, I become impressed. It means they care about you and me, and confirms that they're interested in having their vehicles used for towing. I

found these three tips in the owner's manual useful:

1) When parking on hills, apply the parking brake before moving the gear selector to P. When starting on a hill, first put the gear selector in D and then release the parking brake.

2) Select a low gear in the gearbox when driving on steep inclines or when driving slowly. This prevents the gearbox from up-shifting, and the gearbox oil will be cooler.

3) If you have a Geartronic gearbox, do not use a higher manual gear than the engine can comfortably handle. It is not always economical to drive in high gears.

All good advice from a safety-conscious car manufacturer. But, if you accelerate hard from standstill when towing, expect some front wheelspin: this car has a ton of performance.

What I particularly liked is the wheelbase, it's wide, long and relatively low - all qualities inherent for good overall stability, and it has big, comfortable seats that absorb you into a comfort zone for long-distance travelling.

While the overall styling is a little dated, I feel that the rear end styling is particularly attractive, somewhat reminiscent of serious Italian sports cars, but the front end? Well, you like it or you don't.

Passenger comfort

What you will like is the interior: it's classy, with leather seats that are electronically fully adjustable for the driver. The dashboard is finished in simulated leather and walnut, which is appealing, and the instrumentation is easy to understand and operate.

There are all the usual bells and whistles including park distance warning, CD radio, digital instant or average fuel consumption, fuel range, audio and cruise controls on the steering wheel, sunroof and centre glove box with cup holders.

Another feature I liked was that even though this is a luxury car, it has the flexibility for the rear back seats to fold forward for extra packing space in the trunk.

Price: about R313 000

