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2011 Volvo S60

The Volvo S60, which put an end to boxy Swedish cars, goes a step further with the second-generation 2011 S60 and adds plenty of technology.

This sleeker S60 has a lower traditional Volvo grille surrounded by new details and LED lamps. Prominent shoulders run end to end, the roof pillars are narrower and lower the visual center of gravity, and the roof line sweeps to the tail lamps. The S60 already had a sloping rear door opening much like other cars insistent on calling four-door cars coupes but the all-new 2011 S60 is taller so rear headroom isn't as compromised.

Less than an inch longer but still compact by American sedan standards, the 2011 Volvo S60 wheelbase grows by almost 2.5 inches for a significant, welcome increase in rear seat legroom. Contemporary conveniences, safety features and structure have added about 400 pounds.

Initially U.S. Volvo S60 models will come only with a turbocharged 3-liter inline six-cylinder engine, revised from the XC90's (and similar to the inline-5 of the previous S60 T5). With 300 horsepower and 325 pound-feet of torque from 2100 rpm the new engine should offer improved performance despite the extra weight of the car.

A six-speed automatic transmission and all-wheel drive will be standard on the 2011 model. We anticipate a 200-hp turbocharged four-cylinder with choice of gearboxes to be offered later, but that is, of course, speculation on our part.

Suspension has been stiffened up, in some components by 50 percent, and the steering made quicker in what Volvo calls their sportiest sedan to date. The driver can choose three driving styles with auto-adjust shock absorbers and a torque-vectoring rear-drive brake system help the car around bends. Volvo claims the S60 is the first sedan with advanced stability control to identify and help correct skidding earlier.

A stylish cabin includes a pair each of complementary and high-contrast color combinations, standard leather, and metallic trim (Urbane wood available) in a simple, functional, minimalist Scandinavian design, highlighted by a center console that flows from armrest down to shifter and up again to the floating waterfall panel for audio/navigation /climate controls. A split rear seat and folding passenger seat allow long-item loading.

Dual analog gauges with inset graphics and a shaded screen for multiple camera views provide plenty of information without distraction. The navigation screen rises from the dash for optimum viewing, and a portable integrated Garmin navigation unit (with Bluetooth, HDD, etc.) is among the options.

Safety and Volvo remain synonymous. Among the new options are pedestrian detection with full automatic braking in a radar/camera based system to supplement inattentive drivers and minimize or eliminate pedestrian injury. Also available in the same category: lane departure warning, driver alert, distance alert, collision warning, blind-spot alert, front and rear park assist, and active cruise control with queue assist. Other amenities, some standard and some part of option packages, include active bi-Xenon headlamps, rear fog lamp, 650-watt sound system

upgrade, heated front seats, moonroof, and navigation with real-time traffic, remote and voice-recognition.

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