



# Volvo S80 2.5D



## What's different?

**Five-cylinder turbo-diesel power for Volvo's top model, courtesy of a German rival.**

**I**F YOU PLAYED THE WORD ASSOCIATION game even a short time ago, it's unlikely that you would have followed the phrase "big executive saloon" with the word "diesel". At one time it was a case of never the twain meeting, because your average top exec wouldn't have been seen dead in a noisy, smelly derv-burner.

But times have changed and so have the cars. Today, the big players' prestige models have turbo-diesel alternatives under their imposing bonnets, which are lively and refined enough to put a smile on top people's faces while being economical enough to please even penny-pinching fleet managers.

Volvo is one such company. Not to be outdone by the (largely German) opposition, it too offers an intercooled, turbocharged diesel engine in its top model, the S80, to accompany 2.4- and 2.9-litre petrol units. In this case, though, it's not of Volvo's own make, but the hand-me-down 2.5-litre, five-cylinder Audi engine from the earlier A6, that's also available in the S and V70.

Unlike its rivals, this now-dated, direct-injection unit lacks four valves per cylinder and common-rail fuelling. Even so, it delivers 140bhp and 214 lb ft of torque and is said to give identical performance figures to the 140bhp petrol-powered S80. So you can expect 0-60mph in under 11sec, 30-70mph in about 9½sec and a maximum speed of around 127mph. (Severe winter weather throughout our test prevented us from recording our own figures at the test track.)

Such figures don't put the 2.5D in the top echelon as far as performance is concerned, but once the engine reaches 1900rpm (where peak torque is developed), its initial dolefulness is transformed into an eager surge of acceleration. And the engine will continue to pull energetically all the way to the 5000rpm red line – and a little beyond, if you let it.

Its mid-range muscle is impressive, but it also proves masterful in main road and motorway cruising, thanks to its relatively high top gear keeping the revs to 2700 as it lopes along at 70mph. You would be hard put to tell that it's a diesel under these conditions; it sounds and feels discreet.

Not so on start-up, however, when its rattly growl gives the game away – as do the vibes that send tingles through the seat, wheel and pedals at tickover; not badly, but they're apparent. Also, compared with its six-cylinder rivals, this five-pot engine produces a prominent off-beat note on hard acceleration which, though appealingly

mellifluous in the petrol-powered S80, is discordant in this case.

The main reason for opting for diesel is, of course, fuel economy, and here the 2.5D fares pretty well, with figures ranging from 35 to 42½mpg. That best figure, incidentally, is almost matched by the 42mpg we saw when mainly motorway and dual carriageway cruising – emphasising the value of a steady throttle and a longish top gear. The huge 80-litre tank is an easy filler and gives an excellent touring range between fill-ups. However, none of the fuel economy figures matches those of the previous six-speed Audi A6 that used this engine, including its remarkable 47mpg overall.

## VERDICT

**Diesel engine apart, the S80 remains unchanged since we tested the six-cylinder 2.9 a year ago, so much of what we said then still applies, including our comments about the**

**jittery ride at lower speeds on less than smooth surfaces, and the overlight brakes around town.**

**However, these shortcomings do little to detract from what is a fine car that's spacious, comfortable and superbly built, as well as being exemplary in its safety features.**

**It is, in fact, one of our favourite executive saloons but not, it has to be said, as a diesel. Economical though the 2.5D is, it isn't the sweetest or the liveliest derv-drinker you can buy in this market. Using the ageing five-pot diesel from a rival who has moved on to even better things, speaks for itself.**

**If you want a Volvo more than anything, you may consider this version, but you'll do better for this money by having a petrol version – or buying an Audi!**

## FUEL CONSUMPTION

<b>Fuel grade: diesel</b>	
<b>Type of use - air conditioning off*</b>	<b>mpg</b>
Suburban/cross-country driving	35
Gentle driving	42½
<b>Typical mpg overall</b>	<b>38</b>
Realistic tank range†	72 litres/600 miles

† based on fuel gauge/warning lamp and filling station experience - not nominal tank capacity

\*with air conditioning switched on, consumption will increase by 2–4% in winter and 4–8% in summer

## FOR THE TECHNICAL

Specification as for S80 2.9SE (See R9902) except for:

### ENGINE

**Type** transverse five cylinders in line. Iron block and alloy head; six main bearings

**Size** 81.0 x 95.5mm = 2461cc

**Power** 140bhp at 4000rpm

**Torque** 214 lb ft at 1900rpm

**Valves** belt-driven single overhead camshaft actuating two valves per cylinder via hydraulic tappets

**Fuel/ignition** mechanical direct injection pump with computer

control, intercooled turbocharger and oxidation catalyser with exhaust gas recirculation. Compression ignition with electric pre-heating for cold starts. 80-litre fuel tank with low-level warning light.

### TRANSMISSION

**Type** five-speed manual standard, five-speed automatic optional

**Mph per 1000rpm**  
manual 26.1 in top gear  
automatic 27.0 in top gear

**Wheels** 6J x 15in steel with 205/65R15V tyres (Pirelli P6000 on test car). Space-saver spare

