Inscription XC60 D5 yielded to spring to see how it measured up. I took it on a road trip to Scotland before winter had set in, to see how it measured up.

One of the latest additions to the Volvo range of SUVs is the XC60. Is it fun, fast and furious? Tim Fryer

Volvo is. I want to keep hold of my driving licence.

Driving needs to be enjoyable and functional. It doesn’t need to be manic and macho, which is why I am not sure a motoring journalist is always the best person to test-drive a car. But perhaps an ordinary driver, like me, is. I appreciate a bit of acceleration, but I’m not going to go wild over a top speed that is double the legal limit, as I want to keep hold of my driving licence.

Accordingly, when I took delivery of the Volvo XC60 D5, I immediately selected the Comfort setting. It subsequently turned out that the Eco setting only took a minor shine off the performance, but also didn’t make it substantially more economical. More on the other two modes later.

The task set out before this car was to take a family of four from the south of England up to the highlands of Scotland and do a bit of road trip while in the land of heather and rain. The heather isn’t relevant. The rain is; as, indeed was the snow, as it added a further dimension to the driving experience.

The first thing to note is that the instruction manual is held digitally behind the ample nine-inch control screen and it will not open while the car is being driven to prevent driver distraction. As a consequence, useful information was not at hand when I needed it and I kept forgetting to look it up afterwards, although by contrast this did serve to prove what an instinctive driving machine this Volvo is.

Comfort is king

As a 50-something man with a driving licence, I’m not going to go wild over a ordinary driver, like me, is. I drive a car. But perhaps an autonomous car, features of Volvo’s IntelliSafe system give an interesting first step. The lane migration control keeps a steady distance between you and the car in front. For those not accustomed with such features it may sound a relaxing way to drive, but it isn’t. At least not to start with.

Both these features are brilliant, but it is a huge leap of faith to rely on them and indeed it is not the intention that they should replace the driver’s full attention. In fact, the lane migration feature works up to a point. After bouncing from one side of the lane to another a few times the car will slowly automatically deactivate as the assumption is that the driver has broken the law or some other misdemeanor has occurred.

The adaptive cruise control I used a lot on the motorways: it’s a great device. Mind you, if didn’t pass the ‘chevron test’, those motorways that endeavour to teach us safe driving by telling us to keep two chevrons apart. There is such a stretch on the M6 in the way to Scotland, but it doesn’t matter anything with what the Volvo regards as safe. It tends more towards a spacing of one chevron between cars at normal motorway speeds, which perhaps is putting too much faith in its braking capabilities when this is switched on. Using both features, especially for the novices, probably heightens rather than diminishes attention to the road.

The bottom line is, I wouldn’t fancy any of these although I may have to wait for a year or two until some affordable secondhand units come on the market.

A full version of this review can be read at: bit.ly/1aad7-volvo