

Dos Volvos, número dos...  
XC70: any weather, any road, wet or dry

# Volvo kicks the XC70 up a notch

By Barbara and Bill Schaffer • photos by Arizona Driver Magazine

**W**e often play a game, trying to match people with their cars. It's fun when leaving a store behind someone. As they walk down the row of cars, we scan ahead trying to guess which car they are driving. Or if we're driving, before we overtake another car, we imagine who the driver might be: a soccer mom, retired gentleman, young kid with his hat on backward. It's interesting to see how close we come.

Car manufacturers play this game, big time. They talk to individuals, interview families, drive with them and do anything they can to try to find out what kind of car consumers will want. Then they try to design their cars to match people with certain demographics.

The Volvo's target buyer for the 2008 XC70 is age 35-50, 55 percent female, with no children yet or else an empty nester. They estimate a household income of \$100,000 to \$148,000. Now, we'll be watching every XC70 we pass, to see if the driver fits Volvo's target demographics.

We have to admit that during almost 20 years we've writ-



ten about cars, a couple of our most memorable drives have been in the Volvo XC70 Cross Country. It would be hard not to appreciate the XC70 that we drove from Anchorage, Alaska, to Prudhoe Bay in two days in December. With temperatures down to 35 below and ice-packed roads, the XC70 was amazing. On another occasion, we drove an XC70 for 400 miles up the Baja Peninsula, traversing the desert terrain on donkey trails, climbing over rocks and through deep sand. Again, the luxurious XC70 made the drive comfortably and safely.

Redesigned and reengineered for its second generation, the XC70 Cross Country's styling has been tweaked to give it a more sophisticated look, but without changing the unique lines. The inside takes on a clean contemporary Scandinavian look, as the dash sweeps across the front of the cockpit like a piece of art. We especially like Volvo's trademark center console stack that extends away from the dash out onto the console. In addition to looking good, all the controls are intuitive and have a quality feel.

The second generation XC70 shares major components and systems with Volvo's flagship S80 sedan. This new platform allowed engineers to use a more powerful six-cylinder engine to replace the previous five-cylinder, and to refine ride and handling characteristics.

The Volvo wagon is now powered by a 3.2-liter, 235-hp in-line naturally aspirated six-cylinder engine. The engine is equipped with an advanced valve mechanism Volvo calls Cam Profile Switching (CPS) along with the Variable Intake System (VIS). Volvo XC70 project director Thomas Ahlborg says, "The I-6 satisfies both performance-oriented customers, as well as those who prioritize driving comfort and fuel economy."

The six-speed "Geartronic" automatic allows a driver to leave the transmission in drive for normal operations or to shift manually if desired. Standard all-wheel drive with Instant Traction™ moves power to the wheels with the best grip. An added feature of the redesigned XC70 is Hill Descent Control, which uses the vehicle brakes and engine torque to crawl down a steep slope in total control.

The XC70 accelerates from 0 to 60 mph in a respectable 8.1 seconds and has a top track speed limited to 130 mph. EPA fuel economy estimates are 15 mpg for city driving and 22 mpg on the highway. Our average for a week was 19.5 mpg.

Volvo may be marketing the XC70 to people without children, but the fact is, this is one of the best cars to keep children safe. In addition to stability control, whiplash protection, tire pressure monitor and dozens of other safety features, the XC70 has a new optional height-adjustable integrated child



booster seat cushion. This is the world's first application of the system that allows the rear seat cushion to be raised, based on a child's height, to a level where the seatbelts and the side curtain airbags can best protect a child.

Volvo offers a couple of other innovative safety features. The Blind Spot Information System (BLIS) warns the driver when a vehicle moves into that blind spot on either side of the car. Another world's-first feature is the Personal Car Communicator key fob that allows the driver to check from anywhere whether the car was locked, plus it can also warn the driver if someone is hiding in the car as he/she approaches it.

Early in the year, Volvo announced a new Collision Avoidance Package (CAP) for the WX70, V70 and S80 models. The \$1,695 CAP includes adaptive cruise control, collision warning with auto braking, distance alert, driver alert control, lane departure warning. This system is as good as they get for helping drivers avoid a collision due to distractions.

Only one very well equipped trim level is available for the XC70, with price starting at \$37,520. A long list of available options allow shoppers to customize their XC70 with GPS navigation, rear seat entertainment system, the Collision Avoidance Package, premium audio system and several other luxury and convenience features. With all the available options, the price of the XC70 can go as high as \$53,000.

Driving the XC70 on local roads may not be as exciting as driving in the middle of nowhere, but we always enjoy this car. It will do nearly anything an SUV can, but with more comfort, security and ease of access and operation.

Last October, the North West Automotive Press Association members picked the Volvo XC70 as the SUV of the Year from 28 qualifying SUV-style vehicles. ■

## STANDARD EQUIPMENT

Dynamic Stability and traction control; electric parking brake; tire pressure monitoring; central locking and keyless entry; Hill Descent Control; heated mirrors; cruise control and driver's seat; power windows; tilt/telescoping wheel.

**Base Price:** ..... \$36,775

**Options:** Metallic paint \$475; Dynaudio® package (12 premium speakers, Dolby Logic II Surround Sound, rear seat headphone jacks and controls, Sirius Satellite Radio) \$1,650; premium package (power moonroof, leather seating surfaces, HomeLink, etc.) \$2,995; climate package and child booster seats (heated front seats, headlamp cleaning, heated windshield washer nozzles, Rainsense wipers, integrated two-stage child booster seats with adaptive seatbelt and power child locks) \$875; 17-Inch Sargas alloy wheels \$550.

**Total Options** ..... \$6,545

**Freight** ..... \$745

**Price as Tested** ..... \$44,065

## DIMENSIONS

EPA Size ..... SUV  
Weight ..... 4,092 lb.  
Wheelbase ..... 110.8 in.  
Length ..... 190.5 in.  
Width ..... 73.3 in.  
Height ..... 63.1 in.  
Fuel Capacity ..... 18.5 gal.  
Cargo Capacity ..... 33.3 to 72.1 cu. ft.

## MECHANICAL

Engine ..... 3.2L DOHC In-line 6-Cyl.  
Horsepower ..... 235@6200  
Torque ..... 236@3200  
Transmission ..... 6-speed automatic  
Drive ..... AWD  
Brakes ..... Disc ABS  
Tires ..... 235/55R17

## PERFORMANCE

0 to 60 mph ..... 8.1 sec.  
Top speed ..... 130 mph  
EPA economy rating ..... 15/22 mpg  
Our tested fuel economy ..... 19.5 mpg



River photo courtesy Volvo Cars of North America



## OUR DRIVE

We took this car out as soon as we received it. Controls were clear and intuitive, though we had to think twice, or thrice, about the shaftless key, which though it provides keyless entry, doesn't provide keyless start, although it has the appearance of such a key, and an engine start/stop button on the dash would seem to indicate that's the setup. Instead, you take the whole plastic chunk and shove it in a hole on the dash, wondering which way is up (doesn't seem to matter). And then you push the button to start (and the same one to shut the engine off, while also pushing the key to force its rebound and freedom. We backed over a very gently graded curb and noted a soft and floaty ride, but we'd just exited a sport coupe with a fairly harsh ride.

The first thing we did was to decide we'd go back for our cameras, then and there, and we're happy to report this car has such a tight turning circle (despite its all-wheel-drive steering geometry), we dismissed our prior mildly negative thoughts.

On a style note, we weren't nuts about the accented orifices on the dash, or their matching trim around lower lights on the front and rear bumpers. And the rear taillights, though not conceptually new, look in this iteration as though they'd been created with red flagging tape as an afterthought. We'd either draw less attention to all of these shapes or work harder on dressing them up.

We had all good weather for our time with the XC70, so we didn't experience all-wheel traction on wet, but on mild dirt/gravel, it makes the transition and holds its path as well as any road-intended all-wheel-driver. In all, with large cargo area, clever additional gear stowage, a comfortable all-conditions ride, great instruments and respectable power, all at a competitive price, we'd find this a keeper. ■



KEEP RIGHT >>