

ARIZONA DRIVER

THE ENTHUSIAST'S GUIDE TO LIFE BEHIND THE WHEEL

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MOTORSPORTS

FORMULA E LONG BEACH GRAND PRIX
PIR HONORS JEFF GORDON

SPECIAL EVENTS

PALM BEACH, NEWPORT BEACH AUCTION RESULTS
MONTEREY/PEBBLE BEACH INFO | 2016 ARIZONA CONCOURS

VEHICLE EVENTS & DRIVES

MUDFEST AWARDS AND SPRING RALLY COMPAROS
BMW | FORD | MAZDA | MINI | MITSUBISHI | NISSAN | VIPER | VOLVO

BLUE ANGELS

ZERO GRAVITY ABOVE EL CENTRO

ROAD TRIPS

TOM MIX MEMORIAL
SEDONA SUMMER EVENTS



2016 Volvo XC90 T6 and T8 Twin Engine PHEV

VEHICLES • EQUIPMENT • TECHNOLOGY • PEOPLE • EVENTS • DESTINATIONS • ATTRACTIONS

Scandinavian Design Center

by Joe Sage

Volvo Cars was once part of Ford's Premier Automotive Group (PAG), a high-end brand consortium implemented by Ford at the start of the new century and disbanded as its first decade wore on. Jaguar and Land Rover were sold to Tata Motors of India. Aston Martin has taken twists and turns with smaller investors. And Volvo found a home with the Chinese, as a wholly owned subsidiary of emerging giant Geely.

The first-generation Volvo XC90—launched in 2002—was at the leading edge of a revolution, as herds of big, boxy truck-based SUVs would make way for a lean, sporty and stylish generation. The XC90 has been a longlasting success story, selling a quarter million copies in the United States since then, and over 600,000 worldwide.

they have built three Chinese factories over the past few years, the familiar factories in Torstlanda and in Ghent, Belgium build all our models.

Everyone knows the Volvo brand. It has long conveyed a nice Scandinavian flair, with clean, bright interiors featuring blonde wood laminates, minimalist controls and the like. It has also ridden the wave of a reputation for safety, established decades ago when this was more uncommon. Volvo has expanded its general aura a bit toward the wild side, with rally-oriented R-Design and Polestar Performance models that immediately perk up the brand's image, while promoting its hugely successful European race heritage. No matter how you slice it, Volvo's image has been as stylishly durable as its vehicles' reputations.

The new XC90 is again at the leading edge of a wave. Though steadily successful, Volvo under its new ownership is preparing for a big boost in sales. The 2016 Volvo XC90—a familiar nameplate on a seemingly familiar vehicle—is the first of a whole new generation. By 2020, they tell us this brand new vehicle will have become the oldest model in an entirely new Volvo lineup.

Interest is already high. The XC90 was first announced in late 2014, with a run of 1,927 units

—commemorating Volvo's founding in 1927. That whole edition sold out in 48 hours, 568 of them to customers in the US. Through our launch drive in May, some 30,000 "hand-raisers" had expressed active interest in a purchase, and some 2,200 sold orders had been placed in the US—reaching 15 percent of the 2016 model's first-year sales goal before anyone had even driven one.

We traveled to California to be among the first to actually slip behind the wheel and fire it up.

The new vehicle can in fact fire up via either of not one but two innovative drivetrains.

Over the past couple of years, with the introduction of their Drive-E suite of fuel-efficient yet power-boosting technologies, Volvo has transformed the application of its model designations, to deal with changes in engine sizes. T5 and T6 nameplates, once used for five-cylinder and six-cylinder models, are now applied simply by pecking order, with the smaller T5 typically being a four-cylinder in most models for the last couple of years. Rather than having to introduce a T4 and then later perhaps a T3, they just wanted to stick with the same familiar, comfortable names.

For the 2016 XC90, Volvo goes a step farther. This T6 model bears a potent 316-hp four-cylinder, and a new T8 designation is added for a highly innovative new plug-in hybrid powertrain model.

The new four-cylinder T6 is both turbocharged and supercharged. And this is not just a matter of piling it on—rather it's a matter of very carefully considered sequential needs and solutions, with the supercharger giving immediate power from a standing start, then the system changing over to

turbo power once the system is fully in motion (at about 3500 RPM), eliminating any possibility of turbo lag at low revs and saving fuel after that.

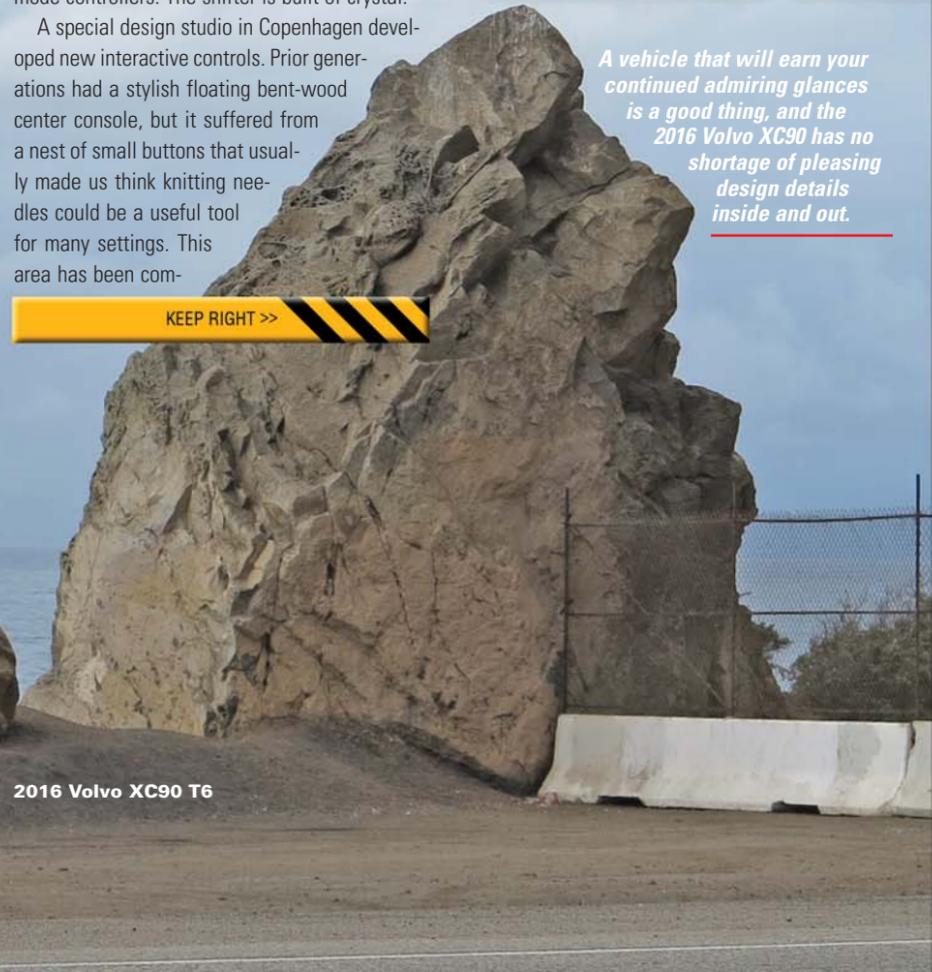
This Drive-E two-liter four-cylinder is one of Volvo's most important areas of simplification, allowing them to engineer their whole lineup around just one gas and one diesel engine—which, in fact, share 50 percent common parts.

The XC90 T8 is a new animal—so new that Volvo had flown in just a handful of preproduction copies for our launch drive. It bears the same four-cylinder engine, plus a lithium-ion battery pack and an electric motor, providing a combined 472 lb-ft of torque, compared to 295 in the T6. This also enables full electric driving for short hops, which for some people could be all their daily driving, up to about 24 miles of range, and it can recharge in two and a half to six hours.

Swedish design character is unmistakable from the moment you put the new XC90's elegant blonde leather and chrome keyless fob in your pocket. The interior is a clean design, but richly detailed with special touches, from graceful brushed aluminum, to Scandinavian woods, to the machined finish of its engine start and drive mode controllers. The shifter is built of crystal.

A special design studio in Copenhagen developed new interactive controls. Prior generations had a stylish floating bent-wood center console, but it suffered from a nest of small buttons that usually made us think knitting needles could be a useful tool for many settings. This area has been com-

A vehicle that will earn your continued admiring glances is a good thing, and the 2016 Volvo XC90 has no shortage of pleasing design details inside and out.



2016 Volvo XC90 T6

2016 VOLVO XC90 SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	.2.0L 4-cylinder supercharged turbo
TRANSMISSION	8-spd automatic
LENGTH	194.8 in
WIDTH (MIRRORS/FOLDED)	84.3 / 79.1 in
HEIGHT	69.9 in
OVERHANG (FRONT/REAR)	34.9 / 42.5 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	(T6): 9.3 in
	(T8 Twin Engine): 9.4 in
HEADROOM (1/2/3 ROW)	38.9 / 38.5 / 35.5 in
LEG ROOM (1/2/3 ROW)	40.9 / 37.0 / 31.9 in
CARGO VOLUME (BEHIND 3RD)	13.0 cu.ft
	(BEHIND 2ND) 41.8 cu.ft
	(BEHIND 1ST) 85.7 cu.ft
TOW CAPACITY	5000 lb

2016 VOLVO XC90 T6 AWD

HORSEPOWER/TORQUE	316 hp / 295 lb-ft
ACCELERATION 0-TO-60	6.1 sec
TOP SPEED	130 mph
WEIGHT	4627 lb
FUEL CAPACITY	18.8 gal
MPG	20/25/22 city/hwy/comb
• T6 Momentum	\$48,900
• T6 Inscription	\$54,500
• T6 R-Design	\$52,900

2016 VOLVO XC90 T8 AWD TWIN ENGINE PLUG-IN HYBRID

ELECTRIC MOTOR	65 kW
BATTERY	Lithium-ion / 9.2 kWh
ENGINE HP/TORQUE	313 hp / 295 lb-ft
ELECTRIC MOTOR HP/TORQUE	.87 hp / 177 lb-ft
COMBINED TORQUE	472 lb-ft
ACCELERATION 0-TO-60	(prelim.) 5.3 sec
TOP SPEED	130 mph
WEIGHT	5059 lb
FUEL CAPACITY	13.2 gal
MPG	(prelim.) 59+ MPGe city
• T8 Twin Engine Momentum	\$68,100
• T8 Twin Engine Inscription	\$71,600
• T8 Twin Engine R-Design	\$70,000



pletely reworked, with a far more intuitive set of controls. A primary touchscreen, center screen and heads-up display are usefully grouped by task, with most key functions accessible via one button. Exclusive infrared technology enables you to work the touchscreen with gloves, or even a pen-tip. A full suite of apps, from navigation to dining, are fully integrated.

Four-zone climate grants individual control to second-row passengers, and the third row has its own A/C vents. An optional 1400-watt, 19-speaker Bowers & Wilkins sound system not only delivers powerful, dynamic audio, but includes a trick that feeds the signal to each speaker with the precise timing needed to reproduce the acoustics of the Gothenburg Concert Hall. A panoramic sunroof completes the feeling of spaciousness inside.

The exterior gets its own complete redo. In an era of increasingly complex sheet metal creases and folds, the new XC90 seems strikingly spartan and smooth. In fact, it may be taking our eye a little longer to get used to that. It somewhat takes us back to the aerodynamic Audis of thirty years prior, or the Infiniti utilities of fifteen years ago, either of which one friend memorably referred to as looking overinflated. However, perhaps there's a backlash to more complex sheet metal now, as we've heard one person after another especially admire the sheet metal styling of this new XC90. Differentiation is everything, and this is a styling approach that reemerges as distinctive.

The XC90 is built on Volvo's newest SPA platform, especially adaptable to the T8's plug-in hybrid powertrain layout. Air suspension at all four corners calibrates itself 500 times per second, while double wishbone front suspension and



Thin-shell sport seats that made a Volvo S60 concept one of our auto show favorites a few years ago have heavily influenced these seven comfortable, legroom-scalloped, weight-shaving, performance-bolstered seats in the new XC90. Long distances are more enjoyable with massage features and thigh extensions. The third row sits higher, spacious for adults up to 5'6", and tighter spacing gives a line of sight through the cabin.

an integral link rear axle with a lightweight transverse leaf spring accommodate wider seats and heavier loads. The suspension can be lowered by two inches for easier rear loading.

The T8 features a crankshaft-integrated starter-generator (C-ISG), shift-by-wire, electric rear axle drive and electric air conditioning, which has received extensive extreme hot weather testing.

Our drive time in the T8 Twin Engine Plug-In Hybrid was brief—about a half-hour in LA rush hour traffic, as a light rain started. The drive experience itself was not highly noteworthy—both models have great off-the-line acceleration—but normal behavior is sort of the point. If you have the considerably higher price of entry, the T8 can whisk you around in all-electric efficiency, possibly all the time, with its full gasoline-hybrid powertrain in reserve for your long haul driving.

The premium space has become very competitive. Volvo has positioned themselves by emphasizing that they intend to deliver to each customer a "next-generation luxury" experience that promises three things: a superior human-machine interface (which says "we understand you"); industry-leading safety ("we protect you"); and distinctive design points ("we make you feel special").

Swedish flavor is strong in the all-new XC90—a consistent undercurrent of style, heritage, personality, philosophy and build.

The Detroit show this winter offered a first look at the Volvo S60 Inscription, a lengthened version of their midsize sedan, which bears special significance, as it will be built in one of the new Chinese factories. The Volvo S60 Inscription is thus, in fact, expected to surprisingly be the first Chinese-built vehicle to be sold in the US. ■



2016 Volvo XC90 T8 Twin Engine PHEV

