

GETAWAY CAR

When they say Cross Country, they mean it. Volvo's do-all, be-all wagon by Joe Sage

Volvo has been going like 90 with their 90 Series—with the endlessly award-winning XC90 utility in 2015, the stunning S90 executive sedan in 2016, and this year the V90 Cross Country wagon. Underpinned by the same Volvo Scalable Product Architecture as the XC90 and S90, the V90 Cross Country is likely to share their critical praise and market success.

In the 1950s, '60s and '70s, the station wagon reigned supreme as the American family car—real land yachts with front and rear overhangs about as long as a Smart car today, which would probably block two or three pumps at a modern gas station. And so it was, until displaced by the arrival of the minivan and then the SUV. Wagons have continued to have diehard fans, though.

The Volvo V90 Cross Country wagon will appeal to those fans and well beyond. The concept is simple: this does a better job of being a utility vehicle as needed, than some utilities do of being a high-way cruiser or town car when needed, a better balance for a great many people's typical real needs.

Volvo's market data suggests "people who actually do things" generally don't choose an SUV (even XC90 buyers have not been off-roaders). These folks put skis, kayaks, Thule cargo boxes, surfboards and bicycles on their roofs (and more gear in the trunk). An SUV roof is too high to mount and unmount this gear quickly and easily. A sedan has a far more accessible roof, but a wagon provides the perfect balance: the accessible roof of a sedan with rear cargo volume rivaling an SUV.

Volvo product and technology communications manager Jim Nichols says these highly active people are deeply into their hobbies—not just the activities themselves, but the process behind it all. They're the gearheads who devote extra attention to each element of their sporting goods, apparel and tools, and to them, the wheels that get them there are one of those tools and part of the thoroughly enjoyable preparation process. They are also more likely to see their possessions as reflecting who they are. These folks have migrated to Volvo wagons for years, and there are more

such gear devotees all the time.

We were once memorably told that brand is a substitute for knowledge, and we have often found this to be the case in some shoppers' choices, whether for cars, smartphones or coffee. However, the demographics behind the V90 Cross Country have given us an epiphany: its shoppers clearly know their game, and in this case, brand is the application of their knowledge.

Volvo senior design VP Thomas Ingenlath points out the V90 CC's additional 6cm (about 2-3/8 inches) of ground clearance, larger wheels, wheel arch extensions to deflect mud, snow and gravel, and the car's overall powerful stance. Yet inside this rough and ready exterior is a Scandinavian sanctuary as in the S90 and XC90, but modified with such details as dramatic black walnut inlays, with the same luxury tactile sensibility but a deep woods feel. A full suite of technology and connectivity includes Apple/Android as standard, dovetailed with a suite of Volvo and partner apps. Bowers & Wilkins offers a 19-speaker, 1400-watt audio system as an option, as on the S90 and XC90, including its stunningly effective settings for Studio, Stage or Gothenburg Concert Hall.

In its bones, the new V90 Cross Country has less in common with older Volvo wagons, more in common with the S90 and XC90. Volvo Cars senior



product manager Stefan Sällqvist, who has flown to Arizona from Sweden to show us the finer points, reaffirms that its Scalable Architecture chassis was developed from scratch in 2010 and modified for this car. The V90 CC uses double wishbone front and rear integral axle suspension, eliminating diagonal road response common with ubiquitous MacPherson strut front ends. This engineering approach aims right at the active wagon's prime directives: it can handle larger loads, and it's very capable off-road, but also a smooth highway cruiser. The V90 Cross Country's tires—developed by Pirelli, Michelin and Continental—are specific to this vehicle's purpose, a bit softer and more rounded. The V90 CC has welcome all-wheel drive, uniquely tuned to this car, as well as hill descent and electronic stability control, plus active damper suspension, also specifically tuned to the Cross Country.

The Volvo V90 Cross Country sounds ready for anything. So we hit the challenging roads, trails, rivers and lakes of Arizona for a day to find out.

The weather was perfect as we met up with Volvo in Paradise Valley, Arizona for the launch of

the new Volvo V90 Cross Country—skies were blue and the palo verde were in full bloom. Perfect weather in this case also included a huge thunderstorm overnight, granting us prime mud and flash flood conditions on our rough road sections.

We started out on the freeways and I-17, exiting at Carefree Highway (AZ highway 74), then at North Castle Hot Springs Road into Lake Pleasant Regional Park. Our first stop here was at the boat launch ramp, where we backed the V90 Cross Country down with a trailer bearing a 22-foot



SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	.....2.0L supercharged+turbo 4-cyl
DRIVETRAIN	.....instant traction AWD
HP	.....316 hp
TORQUE	.....295 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	.....8-speed auto
0-TO-60 MPH	.....6.0 sec
TOP SPEED	.....140 mph
SUSPENSION	.....double wishbone front and rear integral axle
STEERING	.....rack & pinion elec power assist
WHEELS	.....19-in alloys.....optional 20-inch diamond-cut
TIRES	.....model-specific all-season tires
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	.....194.4 in / 115.8 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	.....8.3 in.....w optional air suspension 9.1 in
LEGROOM	.....42.2 / 35.9 in
CARGO VOLUME	.....33.9 cu.ft
WEIGHT	.....4221 lb
FUEL CAPACITY / FUEL15.9 gal / 91+ octane
MPG22/30/25 (city/hwy/comb)

PRICING, INCLUSIONS AND PACKAGES
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Zodiac inflatable expedition boat complete with cockpit and Yamaha 150 outboard motor—the car can tow 3500 pounds—also giving us a chance to demo its quick one-button foldable trailer hitch.

From there, we took the rest of North Castle Hot Springs Road, combining the best of flat gravel rally runs with river fording, bouldering, climbs and descents. With its 2.3-inch enhancement, the car has 8.3 inches of ground clearance—9.1 inches with a \$1200 air suspension option.

We emerged at US 60 northwest of metro Phoenix, giving us a chance to play with the V90's semi-autonomous features on a highway-speed run to Wickenburg.

The Volvo V90 Cross Country comes impressively well equipped for \$55,300 and offers a handful of reasonably priced upgrades, including

that compelling Bowers & Wilkins audio (see sidebar). You can hit \$70,000 or so if you go all out, but we doubt you'd ever look back, once ensconced in your luxury go-anywhere getaway car. Actually, we suspect the same even at the \$55k base level. (There is no über-luxe Inscription model, as on S90 and XC90, planned for now.)

The Volvo V90 Cross Country is enough to make everybody in America want a wagon again—and more than anything, this wagon.

Dean Shaw, VP corporate communications, tells us Volvo “can’t build enough” of the popular XC90—so they are adding production capacity. The V90 will be built in smaller numbers, at least to start. Demo models of the new Volvo V90 Cross Country started arriving at dealerships this spring. You can place your order now. ■

INCLUSIONS AND PACKAGES

INCLUDES: panoramic moonroof/power sunshade, 19" diamond-cut wheels, dual tailpipes, active bending LED headlights, auto high beam, Thor's hammer DRL, LED fogs w corner illumination, LED taillights/side markers, high-pressure headlight washers, front grille w gloss black bars, matt black inserts, chrome frame, silver lower skid plate, tinted windows rear/cargo, lighted door handles, leather seats, 10-way power front seats w 4-way power lumbar and memory, heated front seats/wheel, dark walnut inlays, Sensus nav w 9" touchscreen (6-mo subscrip), 12.3" driver display (binnacle), drive modes, 330w 10-sprkr audio, USB/AUX, SiriusXM (6 mos), Apple/Android, clean zone air system, illuminated aluminum sill plates, auto-dim mirror, keyless entry/start, leather remote key, hands free power tailgate, semi-automatic load cover, rear camera, rear park assist, power-fold rear headrests, 12v power & load strap in cargo area, temp spare w jack, aluminum cargo scuff plate, Volvo On-Call (remote lock/unlock, 6 months send-to-car & vehicle tracking, semi-autonomous pilot assist w/adaptive cruise, collision avoidance w low & high speed mitigation, pedestrian-cyclist-large animal detection, run-off road mitigation & run-off road protection, lane departure warning, road sign info, driver alert, blind spot info & cross traffic alert.

BASE PRICE **\$55,300**

DESTINATION CHARGE 995

LUXURY PACKAGE: ventilated Nappa leather seats, front w power side support, cushion extension & massage, leather dash & doors, heated rear seats, 4-zone electronic climate control & cooled glovebox, rear side sun curtains, power load cover, color-coordinated sills/bumpers 4500

CONVENIENCE PACKAGE: 360° surround camera, HomeLink, mirror compass, park assist, luxe interior lighting, heated washer nozzles, grocery bag holder 1950

METALLIC PAINT 560

PREMIUM REAR AIR SUSPENSION and active chassis (four-C) 1200

GRAPHICAL HEADS-UP DISPLAY 900

BOWERS & WILKINS PREMIUM AUDIO 2650

20" 10-SPOKE DIAMOND-CUT WHEELS 750

