Volvo S90 and V90 Range Additions – plus the latest V90 Cross Country First Impressions

Published: February 12, 2017

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Online version:
https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/volvo-s90-and-v90-range-additions-plus-the-latest-v90-cross-country-first-impressions/



More new models added to Volvo's Premium S90 and V90 ranges

David Miles (Miles Editorial News Agency) reports...

News

Volvo's award-winning large S90 saloon and V90 estate ranges see the addition of sporting R-Design derivatives for both body styles, with front wheel drive and AWD drivetrains and AWD Cross Country versions added for the V90 estate line-up.

For now all are diesel-powered (and with an eight-speed automatic gearbox), although

petrol versions could be added to the UK line-up in future. The T8 Twin Engine petrol/electric plug-in hybrid power source will be added later this year to the S90 and V90 line-ups but not the V90 Cross Country range.

The S90 and V90 ranges have Momentum, Inscription and R-Design levels of specification as does the V90 estate, with the Cross Country being specific to the V90 estate range. All current models, including the Cross Country variants are available with the choice of four-cylinder 2.0 litre turbodiesel engines, with the D4 providing 190 hp and the D5 PowerPulse unit with 235 hp.

At the UK media launch this week Iain Howat, Volvo's Head of Product Pricing in the UK, said that they do not give a sales forecast but up to around 4,000 units of the S90/V90 would be a sensible number for the UK market this year and they have said they expect to reach annual sales of around 6,000 units by 2020.

He said that around 75% of UK customers will choose a V90 estate and the vast majority of customers opt for the D4 190 hp engine. When it comes to what specification is most popular for the V90, he explained that it will be an equal 25% split between Momentum, Inscription, R-Design and Cross Country. For the S90 four door saloon the expectation is that Momentum and R-Design levels will take 35% each, and 30% will choose Inscription. In future around 10% will opt for the yet to arrive T8 Twin Engine plug-in hybrid model.

Of the new additions to the line-up he said the Cross-Country will have a UK sales bias towards retail customers, and the R-design spec level will be more popular with fleet and business user-chooser customers.

Prices for the S90 saloon range start from £32,995 and continue up to £42,455. The more popular V90 estate prices start from £34,955 and range up to £44,455. The most popular new Cross Country version – the D4 – costs £39,785.



The S90 and V90, together with the award-winning XC90 large SUV range, are part of Volvo's new '90 series' and all use the Volvo designed and built Scalable Product Architecture (SPA) platform. As standard all versions have Volvo's Pilot Assist semi-autonomous drive technology. This takes care of the steering, accelerator and braking at up to 80 mph. It will keep the car within its driving lane at a set speed and no longer requires a lead vehicle. The system also has City Safety for pedestrian and large animal detection and run off-road mitigation functions. The range has a Euro NCAP 6-star safety rating for pedestrian protection. There are also intuitive infotainment and connectivity functions, operated via a nine-inch tablet style vertical touchscreen which allows voice control of some

functions – and Apple CarPlay and Android Auto are included. The touchscreen also operates the Sensus Navigation system with full European mapping, and features traffic information and lifetime map updates. Standard spec also includes leather-faced upholstery, heated front seats, two zone climate control, powered split folding rear seat backs, power operated boot lid for the S90 and tailgate for the V90, LED active beam headlights, eight-inch driver information display and alloy wheels.

Volvo V90 Cross Country

At the UK media launch this week we concentrated on the V90 Cross Country estate models as the launch of the R-Design variants was more about specification than performance.

The new V90 Cross Country is the fourth generation of go-anywhere Volvo estates. The first was the V70 XC launched 20 years ago in 1997.

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The 2017 V90 Cross Country has specific different specification levels over its stablemates. These includes 65 mm (2.56 in) increased ground clearance with a slightly softer suspension set-up, Off-Road driving mode which includes Hill Descent Control, wheelarch extensions and side sill and lower door protection mouldings, silver coloured front and rear skid plates, dual integrated exhaust pipes, 18-inch alloy wheels, larger door mirrors, unique stitching for the leather upholstery and black walnut interior trim.

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Over and above the V90 2WD Momentum specification with the D4 190 hp engine and standard auto gearbox, the D4 AWD Cross Country costs an extra £4,790 at £39,785. Choosing the higher powered D5 235 hp AWD Cross Country automatic costs £43,585, which is £1,590 more expensive than the D5 AWD automatic with Momentum specification.

The V90 Cross Country version we tried was the 2.0 litre D4 automatic with AWD, the most

popular choice with UK customers, and as I've already stated costs £39,785. This is competitive with the slightly smaller Audi A4 2.0 litre 190 hp quattro Allroad models and significantly cheaper than the equally sized Audi A6 3.0 litre 218hp quattro Allroad variants. Bearing in mind the added safety and autonomous driving technologies the Volvo V90 D4 Cross Country looks good value in that company.

The standard V90 estate was launched alongside the S90 saloon last year, and the cars quickly gained praise for their classy upmarket styling outside, and premium quality Scandinavian interior design, which was clean and unfussy as well has being very spacious and comfortable. The Cross Country application of the V90 builds on that being a very capable and comfortable cruiser, clad with body protection giving it a more purposeful and rugged look – and of course it is loaded with equipment.

The on-road ride quality is better than the standard models, with slightly softer suspension settings and bespoke tyres which have a coarser grip pattern but with softer-flexing side walls for better off-road performance. Even with the suspension raised to offer 65 mm (2.56 in) of extra ground clearance, the cornering body roll was well-controlled, with the big estate riding flat and level and with no obvious increase in noise intrusion from the coarser-treaded tyres. The steering remains on the light side, but the directional stability is sharp thanks to the double wishbone front suspension. At the rear the multi-link system with its cross-mounted composite leaf spring worked really well, minimising bounce and giving a cushioned ride on undulating roads, in addition to which off-road ride comfort was first class.

The AWD system runs on-road through the front wheels most of the time, but in milliseconds distributes power to the rear wheels for extra control. The Drive Mode selector has Comfort and Dynamic modes and mostly for tarmac travel it's best left in the Comfort setting. With this Cross Country version the mode selector also has an Off-Road mode which locks in AWD and engages Hill Descent Control automatically, keeping the estate at a set speed down steep slopes. The Off-Road setting also alters the operation of the four wheel drive system and is responsive of the engine, gearbox and accelerator pedal. This operates at speeds

under 25 mph. Over that speed the Drive Mode automatically goes back to standard on-road Comfort driving settings – very clever and foolproof.

Driven over muddy, slippery and wet tracks in Cannock Chase Forrest the V90 Cross Country impressed us all, and performed much better than some specifically designed mid-size and large SUVs. Yes its progress will be limited if tracks become too rutted and the vehicle bottoms out, but up-hill or down it seemed the most capable of the 4×4 estates on the market today.



The Volvo Drive-E four cylinder turbodiesel engines are generally also highly rated by those who have tried them. The D4 unit in our test car provides 190 hp and a hefty 400 Nm (295 lb.ft) of torque from 1,750 rpm, and is well-matched with the eight-speed slick-changing auto gearbox. Top speed is 130 mph and zero to 62mph takes just 8.8 seconds. Officially the Combined Cycle fuel economy is 54.3 mpg and on test driving around motorways and rural winding roads the overall real-life figure worked out at 38.5 mpg. As so often with most modern-day engines this figure was not close to the official EU test figure, but given the AWD system and auto gearbox, plus the size of the vehicle, it was realistic.

The CO2 emissions are 138 g/km so VED road tax is currently £130 a year and company car Benefit-in-Kind tax is rated at 27%. For those who tow, the braked towing weight is a healthy 2,400 kg (5,291 lb) and for good measure the load space measures up as well, with 560 litres (19.78 cu.ft), expanding to 1,526 litres (53.89 cu.ft) with the rear seat backs folded flat.

VERDICT

Whether used regularly for off-road work, say by a farming family, vet, surveyor or similar, or used as a tow vehicle by boat owners or caravanners, it impressed us in tough conditions yet on the open road it remains a comfortable and roomy cruiser which eats up miles effortlessly. For those customers who do not want an SUV the V90 Cross Country is a realistic alternative.

For: Classy rugged looks, impressive on and off road performance, spacious, comprehensive equipment and high level safety spec, comfortable cruiser.

Against: Higher running and tax costs over a standard V90 D4 auto estate, heating/ventilation settings operated via the touchscreen or voice function instead of simple controls, on-the-road price without options is very close to the new VED higher tax rate for £40k plus models which applies to new cars bought after1 April 2017.



Milestones and Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

Volvo V90 D4 AWD Cross Country Estate.

Price: £39,785.

Engine/transmission: Drive-E 2.0 litre, four cylinder, 190 hp turbodiesel with 400 Nm of torque (295 lb.ft) from 1,750rpm, eight speed automatic with four wheel drive.

Performance: 130 mph, 0-62 mph 8.8 seconds.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 54.3 mpg (38.5 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 138 g/km, VED £130, BIK company car tax 27%.

Insurance Group: Tbc.

Warranty: Three years/60,000-miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,939 mm (16.20 ft), W 1,879 mm (6.16 ft), H 1,543 mm (5.06 ft), boot/load space 560–1,526 litres (19.78–53.89 cu.ft), braked towing weight 2,400 kg (5,291 lb), five doors/five seats.