Volvo V90 B6 estate car – Road Test

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Volvo’s V90 B6 AWD petrol-engined estate given a festive outing…

…by Robin Roberts (and Miles Better News Agency).

The estate car has been a part of British life for decades. Originally developed to take shooting parties around estates during the grouse and deer culling seasons, they soon found new uses before and after.

That was a long time ago and today’s family car of choice has become the MPV or SUV, sometimes with a four-wheel-drive system developed from the serious off-roaders.

Inevitably the blending of styles and breeding of technologies has created four-wheel-drive estates, some of which stand a bit higher than their stablemates to take on muddy tracks once they leave the metalled B-roads.

One of the first to enter the estate market was Volvo over 50 years ago, since when it has built a sound reputation on its estate cars and the V-series has won many awards from business and family judges.

Some believe the latest crossover estate is going to replace the SUV or MPV and one major US manufacturer is said to be looking at pushing out a new crossover estate towards the end of 2021 as it hedges bets against a fall in the SUV sector it has plunged millions of dollars into.

The crossover estate is certainly a better bet for many families who want capacity and comfort in an easily manageable package for a mostly urban lifestyle.

There are four trim levels in the V90 series with a choice of petrol or diesel engines, normal and hybrid assisted, running to 17 models in total. These sit alongside the slightly smaller V60 estates.

The standard V90 B6 AWD R-Design on-road price begins at £50,040 and our test model was fitted with a range of optional extras available from a very long list of personalisation possibilities which added £6,125 and included a Tech pack for Bowers and Wilkins premium sound, the Lounge pack including advanced climate control, parking assistance and full length sunroof, Drive Assist, Climate and Powered passenger seat features.

The V90 immediately impresses with its kerb-appeal and opening the doors reveals a truly smart and sophisticated interior. Delve a bit deeper and the tactile feel of the interior reinforces the impression the V90 R-Design is a refined executive car.

Fired up and with the auto-lever deftly given two pulls, the Volvo V90 rolls away on a light throttle. It’s a well developed and insulated 2.0 litre four cylinder petrol engine with good pulling power and produces little noise as it covers the ground.

You can select four distinct and different driving modes from economical to sporting. The ride firms up as you exploit the available modes and the responses instantly change, transforming the car from plodder to performance machine.

You have the advantage if you have bought this one of a permanent all-wheel-drive transmission and it’s to be recommended on our wintry roads for the intrinsic stability it bestows on a bitter winter night of patchy ice and snow.

The AWD system does not add inches or centimetres to the ground clearance so its not a serious off-roader but it will work well in poor grip conditions and is a good system if you tow a trailer, box or boat.

The steering gives reasonable feedback and the turning circle is tight and vibration-free while the brakes are immensely strong with just modest pressure exerted.

Secondary controls mostly come to hand around the column and its paddle stalks, or they are on the wheelspokes and central console in the touchscreen.

I am not a fan of putting so many frequently used switches behind the infoscreen as you tend to spend too long seeking them and then adjusting settings and were also a bit slow to react on our test car.

The driver’s main gauges for road and engine speed included temperature and fuel and were directly in front of the wheel with a small central display showing a selection of contents from seat-belts engaged to systems and radio/ trip etc.. Gauges were not marked in detail but were clear.

With the optional advanced climate control the interior quickly warmed or cooled and was comprehensive and quiet in operation, backed up by four powered windows and a full-length option sunroof which allowed light to pour inside.

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Access was excellent for front and back seats and the powered tailgate, again slow to respond, opened from knee-height to well over six-feet to reveal a wide, flat and fairly long load bed with a useful flip up panel. The capacity could be gradually increased and side access was good.

The Volvo V90 ride has to balance the demands of a family hold-all estate with that of a city commuter and it’s accomplished that with ease and style. There are lots of oddments spaces throughout and excellent vision with big wipers, powerful washers, very bright automatic headlights on the test car and long wide beams with excellent cut-off when it senses traffic ahead.

Grip is good despite the size. You can push on with confidence and know you'll not be let down. You'll notice tyre noises rise with speed and particularly over bad roads but the V90 does a good job insulating them from the rest of the cab and the seats are to be praised for their cushions and squabs, powered on our test car for convenience.

Vision is good all round with fairly slim pillars, low waistline and big windows, backed up by a highly sensitive set of alarms to warn of parking obstructions and overtaking cars, and approaching radar slows the car without the driver's intervention.

VERDICT

Its sophistication does impress like few other cars in this sector of expensive estates.

For: Strong kerb appeal, stylish, sophisticated, refined, roomy, practical, comfortable, economical, good performance.

Against: Expensive, high tax costs, some road noise intrusion, fiddly touchscreen controls can be distracting to use, ungenerous warranty.

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

Volvo V90 B6 AWD R-Design 5 door large estate.

Price: £56,165 including options.

Mechanical: 300 hp 4-cylinder, 2.0 litre turbo-petrol, 8-speed auto, 4WD.

Performance: 112 mph, 0 – 62 mph 6.2 seconds, Combined MPG on test 35, CO2 emissions 179g/km.

Tax costs: VED First Year road tax £870 then Standard rate £150 + £325 supplement for 5-years as it costs over £40k, BiK company car tax rating 37%.

Insurance Group: 41.

Warranty: 3 years/60,000 miles.

Size: L 4.94 m (16.21 ft), W 1.88 m (6.17 ft), H 1.48 m (4.86 ft).

Boot space: 560 to 1,526 litres (19.78 to 53.89 cu.ft).