Volvo V90 D4 AWD Cross Country – Kim’s (brief) First Impressions

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Kim Hebson briefly samples Volvo's state-of-the-art V90 D4 AWD Cross Country estate

In line with developments in engine, body and computer systems generally, the rapid pace of change in terms of automotive technical and innovation is clear when driving any vehicle produced in the last year or two, and especially so in the case of so-called 'premium' brands.

This generalisation is certainly true of Volvo, with the company's modernistic recent products incorporating up-to-the minute mechanical systems and futuristic, sophisticated electronic apparatus.

During a recent driving event arranged by the Guild of Motoring Writers, I was able to

briefly sample the V90, in D4 AWD (All Wheel Drive) Cross Country guise, on a mixture of roads in north Wiltshire/south Gloucestershire.

The sleekly styled estate car provides buyers with a comfortable and smartly-finished interior, with generous head and leg room for all occupants, plus technology that supplies the driver with a wealth of information, together with connectivity functions that could only be dreamed about a few years ago.

Driving it...

I was impressed by the interior ambience and all-round practicality of the vehicle, and by the versatile, spacious luggage compartment.



The Volvo was also spot-on for me in the performance stakes, with the four cylinder D4 diesel engine propelling the large estate in an effortless fashion, aided by the smooth-changing eight speed automatic transmission. Acceleration was brisk, fast cruising particularly quiet and refined, and the car was easy to conduct.

For me, the steering felt nicely-weighted without being over-sensitive in its responses, the handling and roadholding – on twisting country roads with sometimes slippery surfaces – was impeccable, and braking was highly effective without being over-sharp in feel.

I could write a book, let alone a chapter, about the car's electronic systems. Needless to say this V90 comes with an abundance of useful safety and convenience functions (and the specification list I was given runs to 20 pages…). Even in 'standard' form the equipment levels are high (as they should be for a line-up that, in D4 AWD Cross Country form, starts at over £40,000 – which means that taxation is higher too). However the test car I drove was also loaded with extra-cost options, notably the Xenium pack (costing £2,000 and incorporating a powered glass tilt and slide sun roof, a parking camera with 360 degree Surround View, and 'Park Assist Pilot'), plus individual options, in total all the options adding £5,875 to the price of the car, in total therefore running to £46,480!

Sensus

Worthy of note is the 'Sensus' set-up within the Volvo S90, V90 and XC90 model ranges. 'Sensus' is the umbrella term used collectively by the firm for their latest systems relating to connectivity and 'infotainment'.

Central to the set-up is a 9-inch touchscreen information/entertainment system display. This is deliberately configured in 'portrait' (i.e. vertical), rather than 'landscape' (horizontal) form, rather like a mobile phone. Like a phone too, it has 'pinch', 'zoom' and 'swipe' activation, with which most buyers and operators will be familiar these days. This equipment is designed to be operated by people wearing gloves too…

An intelligent voice-control system is built-in, designed to respond to more than 300

naturally-spoken instructions or popular phrases. This means, for example, that the cabin temperature, sat-nav or stereo system can be operated by simple voice instructions (even, say, to the extent of 'finding' music by a specific artist).

The Sensus system also enables users to access a variety of cloud-based apps (that automatically update), dealing with internet radio, connected navigation and music streaming, etc.

Just in case you are wondering, this approach really IS the future, but if you buy a V90 so-equipped, it is here right now.

VERDICT

This Volvo is undoubtedly a masterpiece of engineering and sophisticated technology; it drives very well too.

As with Volvo estate cars produced over many decades, it also feels solid and is highly practical, with a large load compartment accessed from bumper level.

It is not cheap, but for buyers seeking an individualistic alternative to other 'premium' estates, it may well fill the bill. A test drive may help you to decide…



Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

Volvo V90 D4 AWD Cross Country.

Price: As tested, and including Xenium option pack (£2,000) plus various individual options, £46,480 (V90 range starts at £35,865; D4 AWD Cross Country models start at £40,605).

Engine/transmission: Euro VI 1969cc, four cylinder D4 diesel 190 hp, 400 Nm (295 lb.ft) of torque from 1,750 to 2,750 rpm, eight speed automatic transmission (drive

system incorporates Start/Stop, Sport mode and manual ratio change functions); all wheel drive.

Performance: 140 mph, 0–60 mph 8.2 seconds (0–62 mph, 8.5 seconds).

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 62.8 mpg.

Emissions and taxation: CO2 119 g/km. Road tax, First Year Rate £160, standard rate thereafter £140 per year.

Dimensions: Length 4, 936 mm (16.19 ft), Width (mirrors extended) 2,052 mm (6.73 ft), H 1,543 mm (5.06 ft). Five doors, five seats.