

TRAVELLING FIRST CLASS



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The new Volvo XC90 is an endearing combination of comfort, luxury and safety, says **P Tharyan**

When you combine aggressive looks, absolute luxury and utmost safety, and put them into making a car, you get the Volvo XC90. The new XC90 SUV from Volvo India gives you the best of several worlds. The car redefines fine luxury, subtle, yet elegant styling and brute power.

The XC90 is being offered in India in two models — XC90 Momentum and XC90 Inscription. The Inscription is the higher model with additional features such as a special key, super premium Bowers & Wilkins speakers that can easily churn out 1400 watts, head up display, Nappa leather seats, seat extenders and interior door sill illumination.

I got to drive the Inscription model in an area located deep in the Sahyadri ranges (Western Ghats) near Lonavala, a couple of hours away from Mumbai. The area was basic forest land, and the rough and uneven stretches of road proved to be the best testing ground for the massive XC90.

This car from Volvo India offers much more than just speed and power — that's a given, since it is powered by the D5 twin turbo diesel engine with a 2-litre capacity. Speed is there for you at the tap of the pedal. The 225 bhp and the 470Nm torque make the car tick.

In terms of safety and comfort, the XC90 sets a new benchmark. The Swedish magic from Volvo is quite apparent when you step inside the vehicle. The start knob on the console is a

uniquely-built device that sets the engines roaring the moment you twist it a wee bit. Controls with a diamond-knurled add to the design and style quotient. The XC90 is built in sync with Volvo's "we begin by designing our cars around you" philosophy. Every button, gadget and control you touch while driving is aptly placed. The seven-seat SUV simply wraps you in a world of comfort, luxury and safety — whether you are driving it or are seated at the back.

The tablet-size centre display with touchscreen allows you to change and set everything that you want from the car, right from the aircon temperature



VOLVO XC90

Engine:	D5 1969cc twin turbo 4-cylinder diesel
Power:	225bhp
Torque:	470Nm
Transmission:	Automatic 8-speed AWD
Top speed:	230kmph
Price:	₹77.9 lakh

to the drive modes to the sound effects from the 19-speaker Bowers & Wilkins system. The best part is that you can do all that with the one tap of your finger. And, you always thought Steve Jobs was the smartest man on earth with his touch phones.

Have you ever travelled first class in a plane? Sitting in the XC90 Inscription just about gives you the exact feel. The only difference is that you are on the ground.

The front seats offer immense comfort. The seats can be adjusted several ways, all electronically. You can move it up and down and even extend your seats for additional thigh support. It comes loaded with power-operated lumbar support, extendable seat cushions and side bolsters. The second row has three individual seats, which can recline and slide separately. Those seated on the outer two rear seats can set the temperature and fan speed to their individual liking.

Because of the rough terrain I was driving on, I selected the off-road mode for most of my drive. This ensured that the ground clearance was maintained at 268mm. Or else, when travelling on flat surfaces, this drops down to 238mm. But what blew me away was the Bowers & Wilkins audio system. Listening to music on the system was quite an experience.

Coming to the light weight, low friction 2-litre four-cylinder D5 diesel engine, which is mated to an eight-speed automatic transmission, the performance is precise. When you drive on the ECO mode it calibrates the gearbox and engine control systems for the lowest possible fuel consumption. You notice that the throttle softens. With

twin turbos and the i-ART direct fuel injection, the intelligent engine gets smarter and each cylinder has its own microchip and pressure sensor for the perfect metering of fuel. Electronically super-efficient, I would say.

It's this technology that helps the engine and the gearbox to perform according to the drive mode you choose, with a simple touch of the roller button (near the start and stop knob) and the screen. You can take your pick from Comfort (for everyday use), Off-Road (for rough roads) and Dynamic (for high performance). Features like the hill start assist function, all-wheel drive and hill descent control makes driving this mammoth-sized car a lot easier.

The XC90's air suspension on all four wheels includes an advanced, electronically controlled damper system that ensures great ride comfort. This system also helps you lower the rear of the car by 50mm by pushing a button inside the load area. This is ideal when you're trying to put in and take out luggage from the car.

Volvo seldom compromises on safety and it's the same with this car. It's a fact that Volvo cars are the safest cars in the world. The XC90 is no different. Ultra-high strength steel is the cage that protects the occupants in case of a mishap. In a crash, this protects not just the occupants but other motorists too. There are loads of safety air bags too. In every crash test conducted by agencies abroad, this car has come out with flying colours. The XC90 is not only about travelling first class, but also about safety and protection.

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