



VOLVO XC90

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ASGARDIAN METAL

Volvo is set to storm the luxury SUV segment with the all-new XC90. We drive it in India to find out if it can actually rival the Germans

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If you're in the market for an SUV, and money isn't a concern – then your timing couldn't be better. From the Torstada assembly plant in Gothenburg, Sweden, Volvo has managed to forge a tank-like SUV, which ought to even make the God of Thunder want one.

The all-new XC90 will be the Scandinavian car manufacturer's Mjolnir (Thor's hammer) that aims to smash its competition. Many will be surprised to know, before the Audi Q7 burst into the scene and became the undisputed champion of its segment, it was the previous generation XC90 that was the leader of the pack. Some may accuse Volvo of being too laid back in their approach, but that's a debate for another day – as this new flagship SUV claims to balance luxury, comfort, power and, of course, safety.

Now the XC90 may not be made of Asgardian metal, like Thor's hammer, but it is the first model to be based on Volvo's

new Scalable Product Architecture (SPA) – and it aims at being one of the safest SUVs in the world. Its structure is a lot more rigid than before, thanks to the use of different types of high-strength materials – including boron steel. And, of course, being a Volvo you're pretty much guaranteed that it'll offer robust protection.

Volvo's philosophy is quite simple. They want to make sure you, the owner of the XC90, feel not only secure but special as well. And so this new SUV is designed around the buyer. Now, that may sound like a sales pitch, but believe me this car stays true to this claim. And that's why we need to first talk about the cabin. The beautiful uncluttered dashboard has a mammoth 9-inch touch screen, which is as intuitive as an Apple iPad. With such a big infotainment display, the sun's glare usually becomes a problem – therefore Volvo has ensured that it's an anti-glare screen.

If you thought that the portrait-format centre interface was stunning, with crisp

graphics, then the unpolished walnut panels on the dashboard, centre console and doors give the cabin a pure sense of Swedish class. It feels nothing less than a first-class experience, and comes with some really elegant touches like the ignition knob that's designed like a diamond. Simply twist the crystal and the XC90 comes alive.

Traditionally, Volvo cars have always had some of the most comfortable seats, and the secret behind this is that they work in tandem with orthopaedics when they design their seats – so the back is perfectly supported. And so the contours of the seat not only beautifully merge into your back, but they also offer excellent side support. Naturally, there's absolutely no compromise when it comes to comfort. Apart from the usual lumbar support, the thigh support also extends like a lounge seat in a business class cabin. If I had my way I would have taken the front two seats home, as they would be perfect for my living room. Apart from a relaxed cabin environment, all

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three rows are spacious. Yes, it is a seven-seater – and adults can actually sit in the third row without feeling cramped. What was even more surprising was the ample headroom, thanks to XC90's smart design.

In keeping with how lush the XC90 feels, it's not surprising that the downsized 2-litre diesel heart is one of the most refined engines in its segment – if not the most. Fire it up, and the 222 ponies wake up without you even realising that the engine is running. The output may not match its German rivals, but trust me it's not a slouch by any yardstick. Some may find the acceleration slightly lacking and would be left wanting for more grunt, but when you're so well pampered in the cabin you don't mind spending a few extra moments in the XC90. The 8-speed transmission is smooth, but it could be a little quicker to respond.

The XC90 comes with four driving modes – Eco, Comfort, Off-Road and Dynamic. The SUV, by default, is in Comfort mode – which is ideal for city conditions and absolutely carpets potholes. In Eco, the XC90's throttle response gets delayed – so that it can churn out the best possible fuel economy. When switched to Off-Road mode, it increases its ground clearance and automatically activates Hill Descent Control. Dynamic mode is when the XC90 lowers its ride height and is completely planted on the road. It also holds on to the RPM needle a bit longer, so that you can get more out of the engine. This SUV is available in two

versions, Momentum and Inscription, and both come with air suspension as standard.

The Volvo XC90 has an old-school brute-like design, which clearly gives it an imposing road presence. The Thor's Hammer LED lights, and the huge in-your-face horizontal grille, ensure that it has a no-nonsense look. The Inscription variant comes with massive 20-inch alloys that add to its purposeful appearance. Volvo has managed to fuse muscle and class seamlessly in the XC90, and this could just be the success story that they've been waiting for. It has a mind blowing 19-speaker Bowers & Wilkins sound system, which is equipped with an air-ventilated subwoofer. The music system not only plays precise individual acoustics, but also creates surround sound like the Gothenburg Concert Hall. The cabin is easily the XC90's stand out feature. There are no major flaws in this SUV, but if we had to nit-pick, then the steering wheel could have been more responsive and the lack of paddle shifters was certainly an oversight on Volvo's part. The new 2015 Volvo XC90 is priced at ₹77.90 lakhs (ex-showroom, Delhi), and if you can afford it then it's definitely a must buy – especially if you want to look beyond that (now) typical German badge. **EXX**

VOLVO HAS MANAGED TO FUSE MUSCLE AND CLASS SEAMLESSLY IN THE XC90



VOLVO XC90

SPECIFICATIONS

Volvo XC90
 Engine: 1.983cc / In-line 4-cylinder / 16 valves / 170wh-turbocharged
 Fuel: Diesel
 Transmission: 8-Speed Automatic / All-Wheel Drive
 Power: 222hp @ 4,250rpm
 Torque: 470Nm @ 1,750rpm
 Acceleration: 0-100km/h – 7.8 seconds
 Price: ₹77.90 lakhs (Ex-showroom, Delhi)

