

Going sideways

Volvo is getting ready to launch the new V90 Cross Country here in India and we got to drive the car in not so usual circumstances. Here's a unique first drive experience.



“
IT DOES TAKE
CONSIDERABLE
TIME TO GET
USED TO
DRIVING ON ICE



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A BIT OF A FLICK ON THE STEERING WHEEL IS ENOUGH TO START A SLIDE GOING

Volvo V90 CC

- Engine** 1,969cc, 4-cyl
- Power** 235bhp@4,000rpm
- Max torque** 480Nm@1,750rpm
- Gearbox** 8-speed auto

- Wheelbase** 2,941mm
- LxWxH (mm)** 4,939x1,879x1,543
- Kerb Weight** 1,966kg

- Price** Rs 65 lakh estimated
- On sale** Mid 2017

1. Interiors are extremely luxurious. 2. Central touchscreen used to control all functions



Let me start with a personal note. Everyone has a bucket list of things to do and it is the same case with me. My list includes unique experiences like going dune bashing in the sands of the Middle East, driving on the Lahar Beds

which is a shallow river in Philippines with volcanic ash making up its bed and so on. While a lot of ticks are present on my list, there are quite a few left and it was about time that I ticked off one more: driving on ice. So how is it possible you must be thinking?

Let's start with the location. Sweden is one of those countries which has harsh winters. Places up north witness temperatures in the region of -25 degree Celsius. In conditions like this, water bodies freeze up. So the locals out there make the most of it by turning these massive ice up lakes into driving tracks! But before you think of the car falling into the water below, let me tell you that these lakes are frozen up to five feet and that my friends is good enough to take the weight of a few cars. It is on one of these lakes where Volvo decided to create a unique track for

us to go 'slideways' on. But before that we had to get there and our steed was the new Volvo V90 Cross Country. Before we get all excited about the sideways action, let me give you the details of the car in question.

The Volvo V90 Cross Country is based on Volvo's Scalable Architecture Platform and this means that it shares its underpinnings with the S90 sedan which is already available in India. Most of the design elements are also borrowed from the S90. So in come those gorgeous Thor's hammer headlamps and the signature Volvo grille. However it is in the profile where you suddenly see things changing. The V90 is a station-wagon and quite clearly Volvo is attacking a new segment in India, one which has not seen much success yet. So how does Volvo plan to make a difference? The answer to this question lies in the nomenclature of this new car. So quite simply put the V90 Cross Country is a fusion of a station wagon and an SUV. So in comes the plastic cladding all around. But changes are not just au-

pericial. The V90 Cross Country offers 213mm of ground clearance which is considerably more than the standard V90. It also offers AWD and the only variant coming to India is fully loaded and hence also comes with air suspension. The only downside is that the suspension is not the adjustable kind. But we are just nitpicking here. So on the outside the V90 Cross Country is sorted.

Inside, the dash and other components are borrowed from the S90 as well. So you get that exceptionally well crafted dash and that large tablet on the console to take care of all functions. The seats are extremely comfortable and there is ample space within the cabin as well. The boot is also huge and the rear seats can be folded to create more space. It is an extremely practical solution and as always we think station wagons make good sense for India.

Under the bonnet of the India spec car will be the 2.0-litre, twin turbo diesel engine. The D3 then will be the only variant launched in India initially. Power output is in the range of 235bhp



1. The chrome bits on the grille are unique to the Cross Country. 2. Studded tyres were required to add a bit of safety. 3. Everything freezes, even the spray from the tyres.



“ AT -16 DEGREES CELSIUS EVERYTHING FREEZES. EVEN THE SPRAY FROM THE TYRES FROZE INSTANTLY THUS CREATING STALACTITES. IT WAS AN INCREDIBLE SIGHT

Likes

Looks, features, performance, space

Dislike

The air suspension does not allow height adjustment

Being a station wagon there is a huge amount of space available in the boot. Seating is flexible too

and torque is 480Nm. Transmission chores are taken care of by an 8-speed automatic which sends power to all four wheels as and when required. Multiple driver modes are thrown in as usual.

Stepping out in -16 degrees celsius weather is a surreal thing. The only thing one wishes to do is to get a bit of warmth and that is what we got when we stepped into the V90 Cross Country. We were initially about to drive to the lake which was close to 100km away and the adventure started with driving on the frozen roads of Sweden. We were also told that the conditions around had deteriorated and as a result, studded tyres were put on the cars we were driving. On the contrary the Cross Country immediately felt extremely stable. The diesel engine offers plenty of torque and the AWD system provides ample grip in icy conditions. So it should work well in India too. The gearbox shifted seamlessly through the gears while in Sport mode, the revs were held on for a bit of fun. Looking at the conditions we could not re-



ally push the car hard on public roads but even then the steering felt light in 'Comfort' mode. This makes it perfect for the mad city spaces we find here in India. At the same time, turn to sportier modes and system weighs up there by offering more feedback. The roads around this place are also extremely smooth and there were very little bumps experienced. In these conditions the Volvo's ride felt supple and comfortable. The only sore point was the constant drone from the metal studded tyres. While they were making a racket, they sure helped in increasing grip.

But before we knew it the empty roads had led us to Åre and we turned off the main highway and a sharp drop later, we realized that we were sailing! No, driving on a lake! We parked up and as soon as we stepped out, the only way we wanted to head was the log fire. With a freezing cup of hot coffee, we looked around the blanket of white. The massive lake had little orange cones on it and a bit of fresh snow! With a quick info session we were given the keys back and were ready to go. Needless to say there is always a first time and this was my first time on ice and I did expect that it would require a certain finesse which I had to

acquire. As we sped on to the track, I could feel a certain loss of control. Things were not happening the way they usually do and the lure of putting this big station wagon sideways was too strong. In all safe mode the Volvo resists going sideways and all the safety systems are working overtime to keep the car straight. But in the fight between technology and nature, nature won most of the time.

However the real fun begins when all systems are turned off. Right from the word 'go' the Volvo is ready to play and with a slight Scandinavian flick, the Volvo goes sideways. Just a careful bit of throttle and steering input ensures that the world is going by sideways and in turn plastering an ear-to-ear grin. However typing these words on a keyboard is easier than actually doing it. So the best way forward is to keep your cool and learn the trip step-by-step. It is so cool to do this and fun as well.

As we finished our designated laps and got out of the car, we realized that all that snow flying around had lodged itself behind the car. But enough of playing around, where is the wood fire and the coffee? ☺

VERDICT

The 90 Series Volvo cars are nothing short of a revolution. They look the part, have strong mechanicals and are priced competitively. So the V90 Cross Country is no different. Being based on the S90 platform makes it a good product right from the word go. But the trick which Volvo has played is that they are bringing the Cross Country to India and it bears features which Indians love. Moreover it also gets AWD. Adding to the package is the price which should hover between the Rs 60 to 65 lakh mark. Fantastic we must say.



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