

Road Beat: Another great choice in luxury



The 2017 Volvo S90 T6 AWD Inscription is worth a test drive.
Photos/Larry Weitzman

By Larry Weitzman

Volvo's been kind of quiet lately. Facing financial difficulty after being discarded by Ford, Volvo received a stability infusion from the Chinese automaker Geely (it bought Volvo from Ford) and Volvo is on the way back, big time. The new S90 is an example of the new modern, high performance Volvos.

Instead of the slope back design of a 1947 Chrysler as in the P544, then to the three box 140 series of the late 1960s and '70s, Volvos evolved, now making extremely stylish cars; witness the new S90. Even the S80 introduced almost 15 years ago was a handsome ride. But the new S90 is a giant leap

forward.

However, careful study of its new body looks as if it was melded from the prior generation of the Kia Cadenza and an Audi A6. Nothing wrong with that, but the resemblance is strong in the grille, window line and cut off rear end. The bottom line is that the new S90 improves on those designs, while adding a few touches of its own with its subtle character line and hood treatment to bring us a very handsome body and face. It is a great looking ride but maybe the Volvo nameplate in the grille is a bit too large.

Size-wise it is a large midsize with outside dimensions of 195 x 74 x 57 inches. Its slickness is confirmed by a drag coefficient of 0.28. The rear seat feels like a limo and the trunk is huge at nearly 18 cubic feet.

With the AWD system comes Volvo's T6 2.0L turbo and supercharged inline four-cylinder engine. The T5 in the FWD is a turbo only version of the same engine and makes 66 less hp and about 40 pounds less twist. At a relatively low peak hp rpm of 5,700 rpm, this mini-mite unit cranks out 316 hp and 295 pounds of twist at anywhere from 2,200 rpm-5,400 rpm which is basically the full power range of this engine. The comparison demonstrates the power gained from the mechanical supercharger. Understand that whether the supercharging is done by a mechanical device connected to the engine or by a turbo supercharger driven by exhaust It is still supercharging which is the principle of shoving more air and fuel into each cylinder under pressure.



Specifications

Price

\$53,945 to \$66,015

Engine (AWD)

2.0LDOHC 16valave direct injected, turbo and supercharged inline four cylinder

316 hp @ 5,700rpm

295 lb.-ft. of torque @ 2,200-5,400 rpm

Transmission

Eight-speed torque automatic Configuration

Transverse front engine/front wheel drive/all wheel drive

Dimensions

Wheelbase 115.8 inches

Length 195.4 inches

Width 74.0 inches

Height 56.8 inches

Ground clearance 6.0 inches

Track (f/r 20-inch wheel) 63.7/63.7 inches

Weight 4,080 pounds

Furl capacity 15.9 gallons

Trunk volume 17.7 cubic feet

Trailer capacity 4,600

pounds

Wheels 20 inch alloys

Tires 255/35X20

Turning circle (wall to wall) 38.7 feet

Co-efficient of drag 0.28

Performance

0-60 mph 5.84 seconds

50-70 mph 2.96 seconds

50-70 mph uphill 4.10 seconds

Toip speed 130 mph governor limited

Fuel economy

EPA rated at 22/31/25 mpg city/highway/combined.

Expect 25 mpg in mixed driving and 34 mpg on a level highway at legal speeds.

Performance of the new S90 is world class as 0-60 mph comes up in just 5.84 seconds. It backs up that quick off the line acceleration with a 50-70 mph simulated pass in just 2.96 seconds and the same run up a steep grade only slows that time by about a second to 4.10 seconds. Those are the times of a world class sedan. While there is no turbo lag because of the supercharger, there seems to be a disconnect in the fly by wire throttle system as there is a lag time between mashing the throttle and the engine lighting off to full tilt boogie. More on this disconnect later.

Fuel economy is EPA rated at 22/31/25 mpg city/highway/combined but the big Volvo does a bit better with a constant 70 mph on a level highway returning 34.3 mpg average. In my run from Placerville on Highway 50 to Carson City and back it averaged 28.4 mpg and overall it averaged 25

mpg with almost no time spent on the highway, substantial stop and go and all performance testing.

Suspension is double wishbone up front and an integral axle in the rear. Although 19 inch alloys are standard, my tester had the optional 20 inch alloys shod with monster 255/35 rubber. Steering is a quick electric power rack that guides the Volvo's wide track of 63.7 front and rear. The whole system can be adjusted from the cockpit from comfort to dynamic with positions for ECO in which you lose the tach or you can custom tune your settings to your liking. Dynamic felt too disconnected and artificial. In comfort the steering felt more natural and that is where most Volvo drivers will operate. Also in dynamic, the engine and tranny are remapped, holding the car in the lower gears too long, an annoyance. If you need power the eight-speed auto cog swapper will do the job for you without the engine racing along.

While there is some body roll, the Volvo has amazing grip. But the handling is still a bit disconnected meaning if attacking the twisties you will have to guide it; however, you can make some good speed at the twisty tango. Not bad for a 4,100-pound car. Turning circle is 38 feet.

Ride quality is firm maybe enhanced by the super low profile tires. In freeway cruising it is quite solid and there is little cush. In top gear the engine spins just 1,900 rpm at 70 mph and the Volvo is quiet.

Safety is Volvo amazing with about every electronic intervention, including Volvo's pilot assist, semi-autonomous driving which I let operate at close guard. It works, but I prefer human intervention. Brakes (four-wheel discs) are huge and powerful and the headlights are fantastic. I am sure the Volvo designed body will protect you like an Abrams tank, but I wasn't about to put the slightest scratch in is gorgeous flawless extra cost (\$560) light Mussel Blue metallic paint. It is a fabulous color.

Inside is a Nappa leather interior and in Volvo tradition the seats, all except perhaps the middle rear are sublime. Instrumentation is complete, Speedo, tach and ancillary gauges. With a trip info gauge pop up in the lower tach area and the center counsel is made up primarily of a huge vertical color screen with more functions than most computers. You can even bring up the owner's manual or a fuel economy analysis. It wasn't that hard to learn, 10 minutes of dual and your good to go. The only issue were the fingerprints. Volvo comes with a special cloth to clean it when it begins to look like a crime scene investigator's nirvana.

With the Inscription, there is plenty of real linear walnut inlays and the materials covering the dash and door panels are leather. This is a luxurious ride.

Volvo is out for your business. This All Wheel Drive Inscription stickers for \$56,250 plus \$995 for the boat from Gothenburg, Sweden. What and you thought it was made in Shanghai? My tester had more options including the 20-inch wheels (\$750) as 19 inch are standard, a Bowers and Wilkins Sound system (\$2,650), the vision package which includes a 360-degree surround camera (\$1,950) and more bringing up the price of admission to \$66,105. It is less than the comparable competition, but it's your decision. You should check out the fit. It could be your glove.

Larry Weitzman has been into cars since he was 5 years old. At 8 he could recite from memory the hp of every car made in the U.S. He has put in thousands of laps on racetracks all over the Western United States.