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TEST DRIVE

First Drive

2017 Volvo V90 Cross Country T6 AWD

DAN LYONS | text and photos
Special to the Times Union

Volvo completes the redesign cycle for its 90 series with the release of the new V90 wagon. The 2017 edition is offered in two variations — wagon and Cross Country — and the latter is the subject of this week's test drive.



The Cross Country's styling blends the refined lines of the wagon, with a shot of off-road attitude. Front and center is a model-specific, gloss black grille with chrome dots. It's framed by a set of articulating, LED headlights, and signature, "Thor's Hammer" DRL's. The profile view shows gloss black trim outlining the windows. Integrated roof rails and rear spoiler are above; flared, flat black wheel arches are below. "Cross Country" is embossed into the rear bumper.

Cross Country models are taller and have a skosh wider track than the standard wagon. The 2.3-inch ride height gain is accentuated by the standard (19 inches) and optional (20-inch) alloy wheels. They're shod with

2017 Volvo V90 Cross Country T6 AWD
MSRP: \$55,300

VOL branded tires. Jointly developed by Volvo and Pirelli, they have a softer compound, designed to meet the mixed demands of on/off-road driving. The suspension is a double wishbone front/rear integral axle design. Ground clearance is 8.3 inches, with angles of approach/breakover/departure of 18.9/17.7/20.7 degrees, respectively. Hill Descent Control is standard.

A front skid plate affixed beneath, but Volvo advises that it's more ornamental than functional. That's consistent with the car's intended use. While unlikely to be asked to tackle hard core trail crawling, Volvo fully expects that the typical Cross Country will occasionally be driven off-road, as its customer profile describes an upscale buyer whose spare time is often spent in outdoor activities. My first drive in the V90 XC covered a mix of city, highway and



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THE 2017 VOLVO V90 CROSS COUNTRY blends the refined lines of the wagon with a shot of off-road attitude.

back road travel. A long stretch of this was unpaved, and it was the dictionary definition of light off-roading: a mix of dirt and gravel roads with a few shallow water crossings, some muddy patches and the occasional, LOOKOUT-FORTHAT rock. The standard, All Wheel Drive system took it all in stride. I'm sure that the XC's off-road capability will satisfy the needs of virtually all of its buyers.

On road, the V90 Cross Country exhibits a very livable ride/handling balance, landing mid-way between sport and luxury. This isn't Volvo's sportiest model, but it's enjoyable to drive on twisty roads — even with the Cross Country's raised ride height. With the optional, 20-inch rims, ride quality was comfortably firm. The paved sections of my recent test drive were largely smooth, but the rare, road crater encounters I had suggested some impact harshness with the 20-inch wheels. I recommend that prospective buyers include some good 'ol Capital District chuckholes in your test drive route (shouldn't be hard

to find — it's spring), before deciding on tire size.

Volvo's transition to a four-cylinder power is now complete. Gone are the former five- and six-cylinder motors, replaced by a new generation of more efficient, inline fours.

The V90 wagon and Cross Country models share the same powertrain: the T6 version of Volvo's 2.0L four-cylinder engine, matched with an eight-speed automatic transmission. Turbocharged, supercharged and direct injected, the four makes 316 horsepower (at 5,700 rpm) and 295 lb.-ft. of torque (at 2,200 rpm). Towing capacity is rated at 3,500 rpm (enough for a small boat). EPA estimates for fuel economy are 22 city/30

On road, the V90 Cross Country exhibits a very livable ride/handling balance.

highway/25 combined.

Turbocharging, supercharging and eight gears to spread the power across make for a responsive combination. Zero-to-sixty times for the V90 Cross Country are estimated by the company at six seconds flat. The car pulls well off the line, and gains pace easily. There's no passing anxiety to

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