



Volvo ups the power for its biggest wagon

It's confirmed the Volvo's **XC90** flagship utility vehicle will arrive with a few minor exterior changes for the 2020 model year (including a redesigned grille), and the available turbocharged and supercharged 400-hp 2.0L four-cylinder engine will get an advanced new kinetic-energy-recovery system that converts braking energy to electricity to replenish the XC90's batteries. Volvo claims the new system will improve the plug-in hybrid's fuel economy by "up to 15 percent." Given that the 2019 version's official city/highway rating clocks in at 58 mpg, the final number could be in the 67-mpg range.



Bentley GT launches in V8

If you've had a tough time deciding whether your next **Bentley Continental GT** to come with a V8 or W-12 engine, the British uberluxury maker just made your decision easier. Bentley announced that the first of its third-generation Continental GT coupes and convertibles to hit the U.S. market in the fall will ship with the 4.0L, 542-hp V-8. A delay in certification for the 626-horse W-12 is being cited as the reason. The V8 is a new design for the GT, which was first launched in 2003, and features two twin-scroll turbochargers housed in the valley between the two cylinder banks. New cylinder-deactivation technology shuts down four of the eight cylinders under low-load driving conditions for improved efficiency. MSRP is \$214,000.



Toyota is partnering to develop a fuel cell powered lunar rover.

Too the moon, Toyota

Tesla cofounder Elon Musk's SpaceX isn't the only private entity jostling to put a vehicle into the heavens. **Toyota** and the **Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA)** are partnering on the creation of a manned lunar rover powered by new type of fuel cell electric technology that will give the vehicle a range of more than 6,200 miles.

It's not a pipe dream. JAXA recently landed its Hayabusa2 unmanned probe on the asteroid Ryugu, and Toyota, of course, has its own **Mirai** hydrogen fuel cell sedan already on Earthling roads. The partnership is angling to get a piece of the coming commercial space exploration market, is are shooting for a manned trip to the moon in the early 2030s.

Meanwhile, the 42.6 sq. ft. fuel cell rover — which measures 19.7 feet long, 17 feet wide, and 12.5 feet tall and will carry two to four people — should be completed by 2029.



The new Ram 1500 will feature a special multi-function tailgate.

Ram amps up its tailgate

The pickup truck wars have now added another front. Rivals have competed for luxury, horsepower, off-road ability... and now it's down to the tailgate.

Hot on the heels of **GMC's** introduction of the Multipro tailgate on the **2019 Sierra** and the **Honda Ridgeline's** drop-or-swing tailgate, we hear that **Ram** will now add a multifunction back door with a center section that drops down to become steps or a ramp for loading.

The tailgate — which will be offered on all Ram models for \$995 — has a vertical 60/40 split that lowers down in its entirety like a traditional panel, or it can be opened on each side like a barn door. Ram claims it has a 2,000-pound load rating.

TEST DRIVE

2019 Ford Explorer XLT

Continued from page 3

never be called on for any serious off-roading. Ditto and more so for large utes. Explorer is certainly capable of light off-roading if called upon, but of greater relevance, four wheel traction is always a plus in a northeast winter.

While it's three years removed from its last refresh, Explorer's interior design

The accent is on the "Utility" in Sport Utility Vehicle. Explorer XLT rides comfortably and handles respectably.

holds up with a clean looking cabin. Its eye appeal is improved by the Desert Copper Package (\$1,840) which includes, among other things, black leather-trimmed seats in rows one and two, with copper inserts. Controls are straight forward. Rear quarter visibility is limited,

and blind spot monitoring is therefore highly recommended. Previously, this had been part of Ford's Safe and Smart package, but as of 2019, BLIS with cross traffic alert is standard on Limited, Sport and Platinum trims.

On my XLT tester, it was optional as part of Equipment Group 202A. This \$6,230 bundle also includes a power lift gate, remote start system, dual zone climate controls, eight-way power passenger seat, forward sensing system, heated steering wheel, 8-inch touchscreen and SYNC3 with Apple CarPlay and Android Auto integration.

Ford includes blind spot monitoring as part of its standard Co-Pilot 360 package of safety technology on some other models, hopefully, will standardize this practice across the lineup.

Staying with visibility, a 180-degree camera (standard on Platinum, optional on Sport, not available elsewhere) gives you a wide angle front view that's useful when exiting a parking spot (or, say, a parking garage in midtown Manhattan). Particularly on large vehicles like this, a



TEST DRIVE this vehicle at these preferred dealerships:

DEPAULA FORD
799 Central Ave, Albany, NY 12206
(518) 336-0979 www.depaulaford.com

JACK BYRNE FORD
1003 Hudson River Rd., Mechanicville, NY 12118
(518) 664-9841 jackbyrneford.dealerconnection.com



360-degree camera would be more useful, but it's not offered. The option list is otherwise fully stocked, and aside from those I've already mentioned, my test ute included the Ford Safe and Smart package (\$1,020 — lane keeping system, adaptive cruise control, rain sensing wipers, auto high beams).

Cargo capacity is generous: 21 cubic feet behind the third row, 43.9 behind row two and 81.7 behind the first row. Lifter height in back is moderately high. Explorer seats 6-7.

The third row seats are suitable for kids, and childlike limberness comes in handy for wiggling your way back there. When not needed, the third row seats fold

flat for a level load floor (power fold, on Limited).

The second row has enough room for adults and you can swap the 60/40 reclining bench seats on XLT for a pair of buckets for \$695.

For parents seeking onboard diversions to promote familial harmony during extended road trips, the option sheet beckons, with a dual rear headrest entertainment system (\$1,995).

A regular contributor to the Times Union for more than 25 years, Dan Lyons is the award-winning author of six books, and photographer of 180 calendars.