

# road test

## 2005 Volvo XC90 V8

Program #2437

In the status-conscious luxury SUV market, a V8 engine is almost the price of admission. But while the Volvo XC90 utility has proven desirable for its safety and sophistication, a V8 engine has not been in the cards. Well, that changes with the 2005 Volvo XC90 V8. So let's see if the status of power really makes for a better Volvo.

Better, maybe. More enjoyable, definitely. From vintage-Volvo conservative steel boxes to this modern art crowd pleaser, Volvo may take their "Swede" time, but they do evolve. And 77 years of evolution was key for their barely seasoned and now beefed up 2005 Volvo XC90 V8.

This is Volvo's first V8 powertrain. And like Ford's vaulted SHO V8 from the 1990s, it was developed by Yamaha, but tailor made for its XC90 host.

This compact, all-aluminum, 60-degree, transversely mounted, 4.4-liter twin-cam V8 generates 315 horsepower and 325 pound-feet of torque. That's 103 horses over the XC90's turbocharged cylinder and 43 over its 6-pot T6 sibling.

And its residue is cleaner than competitors. In fact, this is the first V8 to meet Federal Stage Low Emission standards.



2005 Volvo XC90 V8

<b>Engine</b>	<b>4.4-liter twin V8</b>
<b>Horsepower</b>	<b>315</b>
<b>Torque</b>	<b>325 lb ft</b>
<b>0-60 mph</b>	<b>7.1 second</b>
<b>1/4 mile</b>	<b>15.5 second 92 mph</b>
<b>60-0 mph</b>	<b>124 feet</b>
<b>EPA Mileage</b>	<b>16 mpg c 22 mpg high</b>

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Power is harnessed by a new 6-speed automatic Geartronic manual shift mode, and from there it's an upgraded Haldex all-wheel drive system which utilizes a new Instant Traction feature. Here, sophisticated hydraulics pre-charge the drivetrain with torque for quicker launches and less wheel

And, while great for quick getaways, you should skip any serious off-road challenges!

But at the track, our sweet rumbling V8 had no problem tackling 0 to 60 in 7.1 seconds with a quarter mile passing in 15.5 seconds at 92 mph. That's over a full second faster for both than the T6 we tested two years ago.

Shifts from the new tranny were Jaguar smooth, if a tad slow, but better numbers were still produced in fully automatic mode.

Overall, the XC90 V8 is quite nimble for a mid-size utility. Turn ins are quick, and there is so little mild understeer. Steering is somewhat light and numb at times. And though body roll was noticeable, Volvo's Roll Stability Control is a welcome standard and safeguard.

Relying strongly on its four-wheel-disc ABS brakes, the XC90 V8 stops from 60 to 0 in an impressive 124 feet. Results are steady and feel is good. But, even with stability and traction control, who wants to stop? Volvo's late-blooming V8 is powerful and pristine and a joy to drive.

The all independent, self-leveling suspension is the same as other XC90s, and delivers a more comfortable ride on all but the worst roads. And though revved up and ready to bolt, the new V8 gets only subtle exterior tweaks; a graphite grey grille up front with the V8 badge sewn in, 18-inch wheels, and body color side moldings and door handles on its profile. And, around back, chrome trim at the bumper and twin exhaust pipes and another V8 badge on the split-tailgate.

Inside, the XC90 V8 is also virtually identical to existing models with comfy seats, well-placed controls, assuring safety, and Swedish style. Leather-soaked seats and our tester's wood-grain steering wheel and dash inlays speak of this Volvo's upmarket appeal.



And with its 40/20/40 split second row with child booster seat, folding third row seat, and folding front passenger seat, the XC90 delivers on flexibility as well as performance. Add the optional DVD rear seat entertainment system, and you only make this already impressive passenger room more inviting. Did we mention cargo capacity of 93.2 cubic feet with all seats folded? And a still big 85.1 cubic feet with the second and third row seats down.

And it wouldn't be a Volvo if they didn't also deliver big time on safety. They start with their strong safety cage construction, then add front, side impact, and 3-row side curtain airbags, to the XC90's standard Roll Stability Control.

Taking in the miles, EPA predicts the XC90 V8 will deliver 16 miles-per-gallon city and 22 highway. That's admirable if you can get it, but our mixed loop registered 17 mpg.

But added performance does have its price, and though loaded with impressive standards, the base XC90 V8 price is \$46,090. That's over six grand more than the T6 all-wheel-drive model tested in 2003, but on par with its luxury utility rivals.

So, does a V8 make a better Volvo? For the status conscience, and the power hungry, sure! even though we think a V8 really isn't necessary for this outstanding utility, it's always fun to have that much power coursing through your automotive arteries. Yet with rising gas prices, this V8 timing may be a bit off. Still, we have to give the Volvo XC90 V8 accolades for finally arriving

the red carpet!

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