

C70 convertible is not your typical Volvo

The perfect car for trip down memory lane.
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I'm a farmer's daughter — although I've spent most of my life denying it. But as time passes, I long for the simpler times of my childhood, picking fruit on dad's farm with family and friends. Those days are gone, but not forgotten. So, on one warm spring day, I hit the open road with dad for a trip down memory lane — back to the family farm in Niagara. But we don't take the usual ride — his Ford F-150 pickup truck. Instead, we drive a Volvo C70 convertible.

I'll admit that as a child I hated the farm; now, I have a new-found love for it. It's an escape from the hectic city life; a symbol of freedom — like the very wheels I'm driving.



For me, the Volvo C70 is an escape from reality. There's nothing like going topless — the wind whipping through your hair, the sun beaming on your skin, the smell of spring in the air and the blossom-filled fruit trees lined along gravel streets. On the open country road, even the stench of manure is pleasing.

Just push a button and the hardtop disappears quickly into the trunk. Unfortunately, the retracted hardtop takes up most of the trunk space.

(Glenn Lowson for The Globe and Mail)

Introduced last year, the C70 is a stylish, sleek hardtop convertible built for four. It's offered in a single trim — a T5, which costs \$56,495.

With its dramatic elegant lines and sophisticated retractable three-piece hardtop, it's not your typical Volvo. With the roof closed, it's not exactly a show stopper. But when you drop the top, it's captivating. Slightly rounded corners and a long shoulder line flows toward the rear beautifully, giving the C70 a powerful profile. Colour-co-ordinated door mouldings and Volvo's signature egg-crate grille stand out as well. Bold 18-inch alloy wheels, part of a \$5,000 sport package, create a well-proportioned stance. The package price is steep, but it also adds upscale features, including leather seats, heated front seats, retractable side-view mirrors and rain-sensing wipers.

An optional Dynaudio package (\$2,250) is outstanding; it has 910 watts of power along with Dolby Pro Logic II Surround Sound and 14 speakers, including two woofers. An auxiliary audio input plus MP3 playback capability is standard for 2007. Sirius Satellite Radio is a new option. All together, the C70's price as tested is \$63,745.

The three-piece retractable steel hardtop is a mechanical masterpiece, transforming the C70 from a coupe to a stunning convertible in about 30 seconds.

Just push a button and the hardtop disappears quickly into the trunk. Unfortunately, the retracted hardtop takes up most of the trunk space. With the roof open, there's 170 litres of space — enough for a few grocery bags. With the roof closed, cargo space jumps to 362 litres. A trunk pass-through in the backrest of the rear seat lets you carry long loads. Lockable storage compartments are also handy when you leave the top down.

The C70 is a true four-seater — two adults can actually sit in the back seats. Angled backrests and supportive cushions make it surprisingly comfy riding in the rear. There's sufficient hip room to accommodate wider girths,

too. If you're tall, legroom is tight when the front seat is positioned way back. But otherwise, it's suitable.



The heated front seats are ergonomically shaped to fit your body. The driver's seat is eight-way power adjustable with three memory positions and lumbar support.

Push a button on the backrest and the front seats slide forward so it's easier to access the rear. The move is simple when the roof is open; when it's closed, it's a bit tricky squeezing into the back. The cabin is well-appointed with convenient touches such as cruise control, dual-zone electronic climate control and steering-wheel audio controls. Leather seats, a leather-wrapped steering wheel with aluminum inlays and stainless steel door sills contribute to the upscale feel in my tester. Covered cup holders keep the cabin looking clean and tidy.

The interior is nicely laid out with a super-thin centre stack, similar to the floating stack found in the Volvo S40 and V50.

The heating buttons are a little too low on the stack; it's easy to engage them when shifting gears. Also, the windshield wiper lever and the key hole are too close together. My husband's big hands always set off the wipers when starting the car. For me, it wasn't a problem.

The C70 comes with a standard a 2.5-litre turbocharged five-cylinder engine, which produces 218 horsepower and 236 lb-ft of torque.

A six-speed manual gearbox is standard; a five-speed automatic with a manual-shift mode is optional. The close-ratio gear box is sporty and fun. Shifts are seamless and steering is precise. Off the line, there's little turbo lag or sluggishness. The ride is stiff, yet spirited and smooth. Just touch the gas pedal and the car responds quickly. The C70 can hit 0-100 km/h in seven seconds.

When the roof is closed, the cabin is whisper-quiet. There's little wind or engine noise. And a large rear glass window provides excellent outward visibility. An all-window control button makes it easy to roll down windows quickly.

Safety is a top priority for Volvo and the C70 is no exception. A long list of safety features (too many to mention) are standard on the C70, including frontal airbags, side-impact airbags and inflatable side-curtains. The door-mounted inflatable curtain also deflates slowly to provide protection should the car roll over. Dynamic stability and traction control, ABS with electronic brake distribution, emergency brake assistance, a collapsible steering column, rollover protection system and a whiplash protection seat system are also standard.

Other nice features like heated power side-view mirrors, side direction indicators in the side-view mirrors, front and rear fog lights help other drivers see your every move on the road.

The C70 T5 offers hardtop security, as well as all-weather versatility. Loaded with exceptional safety features, it's perfect for a quick trip down memory lane. Even my dad, a hard-core truck guy, gave it two thumbs up.