



# VOLVO SUV HITS THE SWEDE SPOT

## *Volvo XC90 Ultra T8 AWD Plug-in Hybrid*



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**V**olvo's largest SUV, the XC90, has been running for three generations of the model. The current XC90, which I've just tested, is an update of the version available for the last few years.

Stylistically, the latest XC90 is little changed, but most readily identified by the angled slats of the grille.

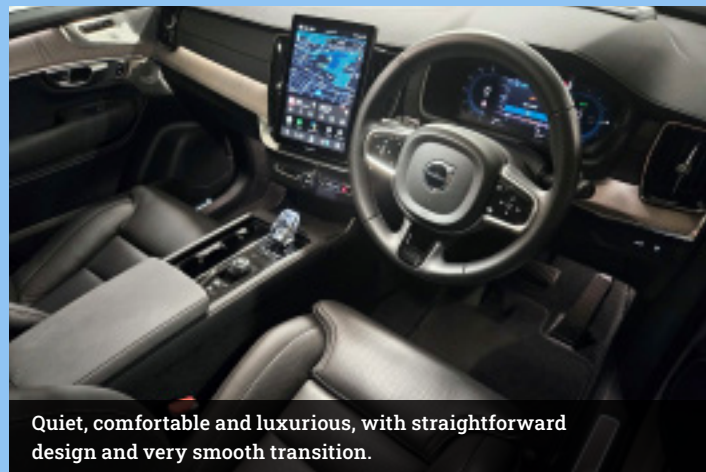
Selling for \$10 less than \$131,000, it sounds like a lot of money until you look at its competition. An equivalent BMW X5, Mercedes-Benz GLE, or Lexus RX all sell for around \$20,000 more.

The Volvo is certainly well-equipped – with Nappa leather upholstery, height-adjustable adaptive air suspension, an Android Automotive 11.2-inch infotainment system, a 12.3-inch digital instrument display, adaptive cruise control, head-up display, four-zone climate control, panoramic glass roof, a 19-speaker (!) Bowers & Wilkins audio system, power-adjustable seat bolsters, a heated steering wheel, 22-inch alloy wheels, and plenty more.

The model has been a justifiable success for Volvo. It drives very nicely. Quiet, comfortable and luxurious, with three rows of seats – quite practical for a family.

The inside is excellent quality, the design straightforward and very usable, with a novel Orrefors crystal gear selector knob.

The big Volvo feels spacious without the gargantuan feel that some large SUVs suffer from, so parking isn't as stressful as with some others. And for a big car, it boasts good acceleration – the turbocharged 2.0-litre, four-cylinder, plug-in hybrid system provides a combined



**Quiet, comfortable and luxurious, with straightforward design and very smooth transition.**

340kW/709Nm, a respectable 0-100km/h time of 5.3 seconds, and up to 77km of emissions-free driving – from its 19kWh battery pack. While plug-in hybrids are not as clever as the self-regenerating kind, it is good for short runs.

The transmission is a smooth-changing 8-speed unit, driving all wheels. For its bulk, the Volvo handles very well.

Volvo has mastered the electronic safety and nanny systems that are required in all new cars today. Too many new cars forever beep, chime and sound alarms; tug at the steering wheel and squark if you look away from straight ahead for too long – such that they verge on being dangerous under the guise of safety. A few makers (almost all European) have far better nuanced and calibrated systems for all this – and Volvo has this well sorted.

Volvo is a Chinese-owned company these days, but the XC90 is very much a Swedish designed and made model, and buyers benefit from that. It's a highly recommended large SUV, very good to drive and tremendous value. ■