

The XC90 is called Large (an NHTSA term for Suburban) by Volvo. But NHTSA calls it mid-size, oddly enough calling XC60 the same. Neither calls XC90 full-size, but we might, given its three rows and generally bold presence—not to mention how it sits in the 40, 60 and 90 lineup.

Does any of that matter? Yes and no. There are so many sizes now, even within individual brands, there is bound to be room for confusion. Some (like NHTSA) use strict measurements. Others use relativity. Some are probably pure marketing.

It interests us with the XC90 because our perceptions would change—in its own feel inside and out, as well as when randomly next to other vehicles, just as we might think we had it pinned down.

Rest assured, this is their biggest, and the best news is we think about it because it's so nimble.

The XC90 lineup offers three trim levels across a tight price range, times two powertrains with a wider price differential—the B5 Hybrid or the T8 Plug-in Hybrid (PHEV), the latter one driven here.

Long gone are the days when Volvo's powertrain numerics matched cylinder count. The T8 is now down to four cylinders, although while horse-

power is moderate, torque is quite high, and zero-to-60 time is quite quick.

PHEVs have long been considered a best-of-all-worlds powertrain by some. Economical like a hybrid, they can plug in to top off, and in a commuting scenario can run full-EV all the time. As the EV push has cooled and PHEVs have quickly become more common, questions remain the same. Is the purchase price worth it? Are there interior or tow capacity losses due to its components? Do they save that much on gas? Numbers are given differently for the two, but combined MPG is close—24 in the hybrid, 27 in the PHEV. Its 58 MPGe is largely theoretical and usage-dependent. Horses (184 for B5 vs 228 for T8) and torque (360 vs 400) need a hands-on comparison, though T8's zero-to-60 in 5.4 seconds, versus the B5's 7.7, is a tell.

Both powertrains are AWD—in-line mechanical in the B5, while the T8 PHEV uses electric motors at the rear. We thought this might be a wild card, an advantage for the B5, if it were full-time versus the known part-time setup in the T8 PHEV. But they are both on-demand systems, running in FWD unless called into action. We had gotten to thinking

2026 VOLVO XC90 LINEUP

B5 HYBRID	Core	\$62,445
	Plus	66,445
	Ultra	71,045
T8 PLUG-IN HYBRID	Core	\$77,595
	Plus	80,245
	Ultra	84,795

about this for a reason.

Our drive experience was good overall. We had sensed a mismatch between driver input and motion at first, thinking it might be related to settings for our optional active chassis and air suspension. But that passed as we became more familiar, our drive now feeling substantial, accurate and quick. We threaded our way through big weekend event freeway madness quickly and accurately.

But we did feel that default FWD at times, via noticeable torque steer when we would want it the least—in fast-accelerating, curving multi-lane freeway ramp scenarios—until the rear kicked in. Both being on-demand suggests any comparison is moot, but the engineering is different—rear isolated on the PHEV, integrated on the B5. This may also be worth a comparo, as it could point to the less expensive versions. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY	Torslanda, Sweden
ENGINE/TRANS BUILD	Sweden / Japan
PARTS CONTENT	Swed 40% / Fin 15% / US/Can 0%
ENGINE	2.0L 4-cyl transverse GDI, alum/alum
HP/TORQUE / ENGINE	228 hp / 400 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO	10.3:1
BATTERY	Lithium-ion, 18.8 kWh nominal / 14.7 usable
ELEC MOTOR	107 kW / 309 Nm
DRIVELINE MAX POWER	±455 hp / ±335 kW / ±709 Nm
TRANSMISSION	8-spd automatic
DRIVETRAIN	AWD = FWD + rear electric motor
ZERO-TO-60 KM/H (62 MPH±)	5.4 sec
TOP SPEED	180 km/h (108 mph±)
SUSPENSION	(OURS: optional air suspension); (STANDARD): F: dbl wishbone, coils, hydraulic shocks, stblzr bar; R: integral axle w transverse composite leaf spring, hydraulic shocks, stblzr bar
STEERING	elec pwr assist rack & pinion
BRAKES	F: 18 or 19-in x 30mm R: 17 or 18-in x 20mm
WHEELS	21-in diamond cut
TIRES	275/40 R21 a/s (ours: Pirelli Scorpion Verde)
GROUND CLEARANCE	±8.07 - 8.5 in
APPRCH / DEPART / BRKVER	21.0 / 23.1 / 20.3°
TURNING CIRCLE	na
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	±194.9 / 117.5 in
HEADROOM (F/2/3)	±38.86 / 38.54 / 36.34 in
LEGROOM (F/2/3)	±40.87 / 37.01 / 31.93 in
CARGO CAPACITY	±11.16 / 35.15 / 64.13 cu.ft
WEIGHT	±4910 lb
TOW CAPACITY	±5290 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	rec'd 95-98 oct unl / ±18.76 gal
MPG	elec 58 MPGe (comb) / gasoline 27 MPG (comb)
BASE PRICE	\$83,400
ULTRA INCLUDES: Harman Kardon premium audio; graphical heads-up display; front seats: vented Nappa leather, 4-way pwr lumbar, side support, cushion extension, passenger seat memory, rear side sunblindsincl in Ultra	
ACTIVE CHASSIS W AIR SUSP	1800
BOWERS & WILKINS AUDIO	3200
DESTINATION CHARGE	1295
TOTAL	\$89,695

BELIES ITS SIZE

by Joe Sage

