




And speaking of the XC70's interior, it is one of the more elegant on the market today. True to its Scandinavian heritage, the instrument panel is ergonomically designed with all the gauges and controls clearly visible and accessible. Every touch point makes sense without having to decipher all the electronic gadgetry often seen in cockpits these days. The main feature of this interior is a stylish, super-slim center stack accentuated by walnut wood to match the trim on the dash and doors. It is a superb detail that adds warmth and sophistication to the interior, forming a nice contrast to the rugged-looking off-road exterior.

Of course, nothing can be written about any Volvo without mentioning safety. The XC70's long list of safety equipment does not disappoint, featuring Side Impact Protection System (SIPS) and Whiplash Protection System (WHIPS) to better protect occupants in the event of a collision. An industry first is a child's height-adjustable integrated booster cushion in the back seat.

Expect the 2008 Volvo XC70 to show up in dealerships in October. Prices should be in the neighborhood of \$37,000. 

INSTEAD OF HASTILY JUMPING onto the SUV bandwagon 10 years ago, Volvo took an unexpected approach: It raised its family wagon a few inches and gave it all-wheel drive and light to medium off-road capability. It was an alternative to the oversized, if not overbearing, SUVs that were on the road at the time. It offered the familiar benefits of a sport-utility vehicle—higher ride height for better outward vision, increased cargo capacity—but in a tighter wagon package with better driving dynamics and fuel mileage.

Despite a full-fledged sport ute, the XC90, joining the Volvo family as a 2003 model, the XC70's contrarian formula is still alive and well. In fact, for 2008, the all-new third-generation XC70 arrives with more power, a roomier interior and enhanced safety.

And to sample the newest "un-SUV" with all the sport-ute features, Volvo invited us to drive the vehicle—in Cologne, Germany. The land of high-speed *Autobahnen* and winding country roads is more fitting for a performance car than the Swedish company's newest XC70. But perhaps this is Volvo doing the unexpected again.

Our afternoon drive begins with a short blast down the *Autobahn* just outside of the city. The new XC70's 235-bhp 3.2-liter inline-6 is straight from the company's S80 sedan. With a variable intake system that helps

2008

VOLVO XC70

Expect the unexpected

BY PATRICK HONG

broaden the torque curve, the aluminum-block engine, good for 236 lb.-ft. of torque, pushes the 2-ton vehicle up to speed with ease. The XC70's smooth, 6-speed Geartronic automatic transmission extracts the best from the powerplant to keep the car (by no means a rocket ship) traveling with the traffic flow.

Off the superhighway, the XC70 handles with confidence on twisty roads. The front strut-type and rear multilink suspension is well tuned to ensure the 17-in. tires keep their contact patches firmly planted on the asphalt. Volvo claims a 15-percent increase in chassis torsional rigidity, which helps keep the XC70's body in check through turns; even with a raised ride height of 8.3 in., this Volvo does not flop over around tight curves. The all-wheel-drive system works with the Dynamic Stability and Traction Control (DSTC) system to give the driver and the passengers that extra layer of safety when needed.

On an off-road course, our XC70 motors up a steep hill with little effort, traverses the woods with excellent traction and steps slowly down a steep

grade with Hill Descent Control (HDC). And all this is done with me cocooned in the comfort of a supportive driver's seat and an inviting interior.

» Volvo's XC70 continues as a high-riding wagon with some off-road abilities, but the new car benefits from a more rigid chassis, revised styling, increased power and a more elegant Scandinavian interior.

