

# Volvo V70 2006: The Weekly Driver

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If a buyer's priorities are comfort, performance and safety, Volvo is a fine choice. It's hard to rattle the Swedish manufacturer's reputation of delivering efficient, if undistinguished, vehicles ideal for open-road driving under any circumstances.

The 2006 V70 R (station wagon) further adds to the already nice Volvo overall package with its substantial cargo room.

Yet, the V70 finds itself in a tough crowd among the industry's fastest growing sales segment, the premium midsized class. It includes the Mercedes Benz E-Class, the Audi all-road Quattro, Cadillac CTS and Infiniti G35, among others.

One of four model options including the XC70 (raised suspension), the V70 features a 2.5-liter turbocharged, 300-horsepower 5-cylinder engine with a six-speed automatic transmission. The Volvo V70 has faster competitors, but with its AWD features, it feels particularly secure during any task and it has enough power and acceleration to get the job done.

It's Volvo's trademark steering and handling that quickly impresses. It rained periodically and there was intermittent fog during one 200-mile round-trip test drive that began in late-morning overcast conditions and concluded under ominous night-driving conditions. Whether entering swooping freeway entrance ramps, changing lanes at high-speed or maneuvering in the varying close-knit city and freeway traffic, the V70 performed admirably.

Inclement weather -- let's say winter conditions in Sweden -- can deter many drivers, whether they're in Scandinavia or Lake Tahoe. But the secure feel of the V70, particularly with its AWD, should calm drivers' pending nerves.

The V70 has a nicely designed interior, including angularly divided console and instrumentation panels. The AM/FM, CD player configuration is clean, well-contoured and features functionally clean dials and controls. Yet, the interior features, while attractive, well-constructed and nicely situated, also get lower-than-expected grades in three categories.

The instrumentation backlighting is not sufficient after nightfall, primarily because the silver lettering and numbering is hard to see against the blue background. I kept trying to increase brightness level when it was already at its max.

Two other concerns: the side-view mirror control, positioned on the driver's inside door panel, has an awkward mechanical formula. And likewise, the rear cargo area pull-down security cover is difficult to maneuver into place on its odd-shaped hinges - even when using two hands.

Still, the V70 has wide range of fine features -- Bi-Xenon headlights to fully contoured leather seats, superior head and foot room in the front and rear seats to a tilt and telescopic three-spoke steering wheel with a race-car tight feel.

The automatic transmission (\$1,250), audio system with Dolby surround sound and power glass moonroof (\$2,400), heated front seats (\$600) and the "electric" silver metallic exterior paint (\$625) are pricey options. Combined, with a \$695 destination fee, the total price of my test vehicle just exceeded \$45,000.

For comfort, superior handling and safety and spacious cargo room, the Volvo V70 makes a strong case for itself. Yet it has plenty of more renowned opponents whose reputations are equally well earned for hard-to-argue-against reasons.

## **2006 Volvo V70: The Weekly Driver**

**Safety features** -- Driver and passenger dual front and front-side curtain impact airbags

**Fuel Mileage (estimates)** -- 18 mpg (city), 25 mpg (highway).

**Warranty** -- Bumper-to-bumper, 4 years/50,000 miles; Free schedule maintenance, 3 years/30,000 miles; Corrosion, 8 years/unlimited mileage; roadside assistance, 4 years/unlimited miles.

**Base price** -- \$39,255.