SWEDEN 1958-1965

Volvo PV544

When Volvo launched its PV544 sedan in 1958, it already looked 20 years old. However, its performance belied its appearance and it became one of the most successful rally cars of the early 1960s.

Produced by Volvo Car Corporation, Gothenburg, Sweden

VITAL STATISTICS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specification</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Top speed</td>
<td>98 mph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-60 mph</td>
<td>10.5 sec.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engine type</td>
<td>In-line four</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displacement</td>
<td>1,780 cc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max power</td>
<td>90 bhp at 5,000 rpm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max torque</td>
<td>105 lb-ft at 3,500 rpm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight</td>
<td>2,160 lbs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gas mileage</td>
<td>25 mpg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price (1962)</td>
<td>$2,395</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

...this cat's got scat!

"As one journalist put it: 'Hold on to your hats, guys, this cat's got scat!' The PV's acceleration is better than most six-cylinder compacts of its time. At the wheel, sitting upright in the firm bucket seat, you are confronted by a large steering wheel and strip speedometer. The steering is light but direct, and the brakes are good for an all-drum setup but fade with abuse. Despite its ancient suspension, the handling is surprisingly good."

A large steering wheel and painted metal dash give the PV544 added character.
Volvo PV544

One of the most unlikely looking competition cars, the PV544 was nevertheless one of the most successful rally and track racers in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

Strong engine
It was Volvo’s five-bearing four-cylinder engine that really gave the company its reputation for building unbreakable cars. They often cover 250,000 miles before a major rebuild, some having managed more than half a million miles. The roadgoing PV544 Sport uses the engine in 90-bhp (later 95-bhp) form.

Four-wheel drum brakes
Drum brakes are used all around. The system is just powerful enough to cope with the car’s performance but is definitely one of its weak points. Many owners now fit front discs from the Volvo ‘Amazon’ 120 series.

Wishbone front suspension
The PV uses unequal length double-wishbone front suspension with coil springs and telescopic shock absorbers. Rally cars often used a twin-shock set up to deal with the rough terrain.

Basic interior
Although the firm cloth-trimmed seats are comfortable and supportive, the interior could never be described as luxurious. Carpets were never fitted to the PV, just practical and tough rubber mats.
**Worm-and-roller steering**

Rather than the more common rack-and-pinion system, the PV uses worm-and-roller steering. It is light but quite fast, at 3.2 turns from lock-to-lock, and has little self-centering action.

**Wheel drum brakes**

Brakes are used all around. The system is just powerful enough to cope with the car's performance and is definitely one of its points. Many owners have switched to front disc from the 'Amazon' 120 series.

**Well-located live axle**

This car uses a simple coil-sprung live axle that is solidly located by huge trailing arms and a Panhard rod.

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**Specifications**

**1963 PV544 Sport**

**ENGINE**

- **Type**: In-line four-cylinder
- **Construction**: Cast-iron block and head
- **Valve gear**: Two valves per cylinder operated by a single camshaft via pushrods and rockers
- **Bore and stroke**: 3.31 in. x 3.15 in.
- **Displacement**: 1,780 cc
- **Compression ratio**: 8.5:1
- **Induction system**: Twin SU carburetors
- **Maximum power**: 90 bhp at 5,000 rpm
- **Maximum torque**: 105 lb-ft at 3,500 rpm

**TRANSMISSION**

Four-speed manual

**BODY/CHASSIS**

Steel monocoque two-door sedan

**SPECIAL FEATURES**

- The B 18 badge on the grill signifies the 1.8-liter engine in the Sport model.
- Dual handles operate the door latches and window winders.

**RUNNING GEAR**

- **Steering**: Worm-and-roller
- **Front suspension**: Double wishbones with coil springs, telescopic shock absorbers and anti-roll bar
- **Rear suspension**: Live axle with coil springs, trailing arms, Panhard rod and telescopic shock absorbers
- **Brakes**: Drums (front and rear)
  - **Wheels**: Pressed steel, 15-in. dia.
  - **Tires**: 5.90 x 15 in.

**DIMENSIONS**

- **Length**: 175.0 in.
- **Width**: 62.5 in.
- **Height**: 61.5 in.
- **Wheelbase**: 102.5 in.
- **Track**: 51.0 in. (front), 51.8 in. (rear)
- **Weight**: 2,160 lbs.
Milestones

1943 Work starts on a new small Volvo.

1944 Volvo shows its new car, the PV444, at a special exhibition in Stockholm.

1947 The PV444 finally enters production.

A wagon version of the PV—the Duett—was also offered.

1955 The first PV444s reach the U.S. In response to high demands, Volvo launches a ‘Sport’ model.

Although launched in 1944, production of the PV444 did not begin until after World War II.

1958 The PV444 is updated to form the PV544. Art Riley drives his PV444 to victory at Sebring.

1963 Tom Trana wins the British RAC Rally in a PV544. The car lasts until 1965, winning the East African Safari Rally in its final year.

Reliable and strong

When first launched in 1958, the PV544 was powered by the immensely tough B16 three-bearing four-cylinder 1.6-liter unit used in the PV444. The 1.8-liter B18 engine arrived in 1962. This had a stronger bottom end, with five main bearings which gave it an enviable reputation for longevity and reliability. In ‘Sport’ tune, with twin SU carburetors, it produces 90 bhp (95 bhp for the last few months) and 105 lb-ft of torque. Works rally cars were tuned to give up to 130 bhp.

Sport sedan

When Volvo fitted the B18 engine to the PV544 Sport, it created a real performance sedan. The quirky styling, gutsy four-cylinder, and tidy rear-wheel drive handling made it an interesting alternative to home grown V8 performance cars.

NOSE TO NOSE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volkswagen Beetle 1954</th>
<th>Chevrolet II Nova SS</th>
<th>Volvo PV544 Sport</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOP SPEED</strong></td>
<td><strong>0-60 mph</strong></td>
<td><strong>POWER</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70 mph</td>
<td>16.1 sec</td>
<td>44 bhp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>105 mph</td>
<td>9.8 sec.</td>
<td>140 bhp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98 mph</td>
<td>10.5 sec.</td>
<td>90 bhp</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**RIVAL CARS**

**VOLKSWAGEN BEETLE 1954**

**CHEVROLET II NOVA SS**

**VOLVO PV544 SPORT**

**Value Guide**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORIGINAL PRICE</th>
<th>CURRENT VALUE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$2,395</td>
<td>$2,000-$7,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Simple, yet fast and tough, the PV544 is an ideal rally car.