

INTERIOR DESIGN

In brief:

- **Unique free-floating, ultra-thin central instrument stack.**
- **Design inspired by Scandinavian heritage and top entertainment systems.**
- **'Layered' interior creates impression of space and quality.**
- **Space for five adults.**
- **Generous (1307litre) boot capacity with split/fold flat rear seats.**
- **Passenger seat back folds forwards to accommodate loads up to accommodate extra long loads.**

While the exterior of the all-new Volvo V50 sportswagon could be described as evolutionary, the interior represents nothing less than a revolution in car design. The cabin is constructed of several visual "layers", which focus attention on an ultra-thin central instrument stack. The stack is a world first and appears to be free floating in space. It was previewed in the Volvo VCC (Versatility Concept Car) at the 2003 Geneva motor show, and is inspired by the latest design trends in high-end cameras, hi-fi and electrical items, and is a reflection of Volvo's Scandinavian design heritage and commitment to premium quality.

Form and function go hand in hand in a cabin that offers comfortable accommodation for up to five adults and a capacious load bay that has a maximum capacity of 1307 litres. The versatility of this area is enhanced by rear seats that split/fold flat and by a passenger seat backrest that folds down to allow extra long loads to be carried.

In full:

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Scandinavian Style

While the exterior of the Volvo V50 Sportswagon could be described as evolutionary, the interior represents nothing less than a revolution in car design. Its focal point is an ultra-thin central instrument stack, which appears to be free-floating in space. This is a world-first for the automotive sector and was previewed on the Volvo VCC (Versatility Concept Car). It is a reflection of Volvo's Scandinavian design heritage and its commitment to premium quality. "The super-slim format is the ultimate icon of the car and a revolution in itself," says its chief designer, Guy Borgoyne.

The inspiration for the interior of the V50 came from outside the car world: "If you want to be innovative, there is little point looking at what the competition is doing," explains Volvo's Design Director, "it is far more valuable to look at what they're not doing."

Volvo's design team were influenced by the Scandinavian design tradition of clean surfaces and uncluttered lines. They drew inspiration, for example, from the elegant simplicity of the classic compression-moulded Series 7 chair, designed by the world-famous Arne Jacobsen. Trends in high-tech electrical equipment, such as cameras, audio systems and computers, were also studied. Notes were taken on how the designers use and combine new materials so that they form part of the user-experience. These disparate influences – classic Scandinavian style and high-tech innovation – were combined to create a radically different interior concept.

The interior is built up of several visual layers. The first is an edge that flows around the base of the windscreen and along the door frames, trimming the entire interior. This provides occupants with the impression that they are safely ensconced in a cocoon.

The second layer is the primary fascia, which is minimalist. The air vents and secondary controls are positioned in individual islands, while the main instruments are grouped in two round gauges, surrounded by contrasting metal bezels. The choice of fascia finish is also significant – Volvo has eschewed the traditional leather-look in favour of a new texture that conveys a sense of cutting-edge technical innovation.

The ultra-thin central instrument stack forms the uppermost layer. Boasting a prominent position in the centre of the car, it fulfils the role of a remote control unit in a contemporary home entertainment system. Constructing such a novel feature was no easy task – "it required considerable ingenuity and hard work to find a technical solution for this super-slim format," explains Borgoyne. But no-one will doubt that the hard work has paid dividends. The slim design creates a feeling of luxurious space and the effect is enhanced by "theatre style" illumination, which discreetly draws the occupants' attention to the unit.

The centre stack on 'S' models has a Bauxite grey metallic finish, but customers choosing a Sport get a real aluminium material, while 'SE' models have the choice of the aluminium or a dark wood effect.

Comfort and convenience

While the interior of the Volvo V50 sportswagon places an emphasis on style, form has not been allowed to take precedence over function. The fascia ergonomics have been carefully designed and drivers will find that the controls are sensibly cited and within easy reach. The driver's seat is multi-adjustable and the steering wheel adjusts for both rake and reach, ensuring that drivers of all shapes and sizes can get comfortable.

The orthopaedically designed seats also benefit from a new range of fabrics, including T-Tec – fitted to Sport models. T-Tec is a material that has been specifically developed for Volvo and was inspired by sportswear and travel accessories. Hardwearing but comfortable, the T-Tec trim option features visible, light-coloured seams, highlighting the car's dynamic appeal.

Customers will also be delighted to discover an interior packed with clever solutions. The development of the ultra-thin technology, for example, enabled Volvo's designers to introduce a useful storage area behind the central stack, which can be accessed from both front seats.

There is also plenty of room for passengers. The V50 is 54mm wider and 27mm taller than the Volvo V40 outgoing model and the wheelbase has grown by 78mm. Together with packaging improvements, these increased dimensions have created a car with more interior room. Five occupants can travel in comfort and they all benefit from a full three-point safety belt system.

The new V50 is self-consciously a Sportswagon: "The emphasis has been placed on attractive design and a sense of sportiness, with a 'bonus' in the form of practical details and extra luggage space," said Volvo Cars then President and CEO, Hans-Olov Olsson at the V50's world debut.

But the size of this 'bonus' should not be underestimated. The Volvo signature stacked-tail lamps and near-vertical rear door creates a wide load aperture through which large, awkward items can be loaded.

At 4.51m in length, the Volvo V50 Sportswagon competes with the Audi A4 Avant (4.54m) and the BMW 3-series Touring (4.48m), and its luggage volume reflects this. With the rear

seats in place, the Volvo offers 417 litres of space, compared with 442 litres for the Audi and the BMW's 435 litres. But with the rear seats folded flat, the Volvo V50 offers significantly more capacity than the Audi (1307 litres versus 1184 litres) and only a little less than the BMW (1345 litres).

The versatility of this space is enhanced by the split/fold rear seats, which fold to provide a completely flat load surface. The front passenger seat also folds forwards to allow 3m long items, such as a surfboard, to be carried.