



VOLVO 740 TURBO WAGON

Apple pie, served warm and à la mode

PHOTOS BY JOHN LAMM



WHAT IS NATIONAL character in a car? This somewhat tired question is occasionally worth a re-think. If the German car is authoritative about its own excellence and the Japanese car unbeatably marketable, what is a Swedish car? A hard question. The Saab and the Volvo may have evolved from the same requirements for sturdiness, but they are as different from each other as seems possible. The Saab is nonconformist but generally European in nature, while the Volvo is probably the most American car ever to come over by boat. A truly assimilated product, the Volvo is your car next door, often taken for granted, perhaps by some people even taken to be domestic. Apple pie.

Because a fairly large portion of Volvo production—24 percent—comes to the United States, we may not realize what a small company it is. In 1983 Volvo sold just 365,000 cars, 87,700 of them in America and only 61,900 in its homeland, and Volvo expects to top the 100,000 figure in the U.S. in 1985. Almost a third of all Volvos built are station wagons, and when you think about it, it's hard to imagine an American street without one. Our two busiest contributing photographers, for instance, could hardly imagine operating without theirs.

Both of them, enthusiastic drivers as well as working professionals, showed more than usual interest in this particular test car, the 740 Turbo Wagon. When the 760 series made its debut



in 1983, it was seen as very American in character, particularly its styling, much like contemporary GM practice. The 2.8-liter V-6 GLE was a luxury sedan, the flagship of the line, not asked to do the everyday work of the 4-cylinder DL and GL models. Now the newest Volvo chassis has been given a station wagon body and put to work in earnest.

Based on the sedan, the styling of the new wagon is extremely successful. Replacing the 4-door's awkward notchback is a clean and well proportioned 5-door box, as handsome a wagon as anyone could ask for. Particularly effective are the tall side windows, perfectly proportioned to the vehicle's side area and helping to reduce the visual bulk. The wagon is so good-looking that it seems to have been conceived from the beginning of the 7-series project, and probably was. The front still has the same heavy, squarish look, with an air dam of definitely added-on appearance, but from the wheel arch on back, everything works exceedingly well.

So do the mechanical parts. Surprisingly, the PRV V-6 engine is absent from the new lineup of 740 and 760 wagons. That powerplant, introduced on the 264 in 1975 and shared with Peugeot and Renault, is still available in the 760GLE sedan. It is now slightly long-in-the-tooth and is being extensively redesigned for the future 780 series. So Volvo is using a bevy of 4-cylinder engines for its biggest wagons: the fuel-injected B-230F with 114 bhp, the turbocharged B-230FT with 160, and the D-24T turbodiesel with 106. The B-230 series, developed from the B-23, has new lighter pistons and connecting rods, the principal objective being to reduce friction and reciprocating mass, and a crankshaft with eight counterweights for smoother running with the same bearing surfaces and standard of durability.

If we had doubts about the suitability of 4-cylinder power for such a substantial vehicle, the intercooled B-230FT quickly dispelled them. This is a willing performer, reasonably smooth, with good torque and perhaps the best integration of turbo boost we've seen. The car's acceleration is so strong and progressive that only the little whine from the turbine tells you the engine is

turbocharged (not counting, of course, the labels and boost gauge). The boost comes in at about 1300 rpm, almost imperceptibly, and becomes increasingly potent from 1500 up. You can drive the Volvo wagon sedately, but it can be a wheel-smoker when you want it to be. Warmed-up apple pie.

The acceleration figures are very good for a 3100-lb car, 0-60

AT A GLANCE		Volvo 740 Turbo Wagon	Audi 5000S Wagon	Peugeot 505S Wagon
Price, base/ as tested		\$21,340 \$21,340	\$18,920 \$19,390	\$16,695 \$17,370
Curb weight, lb		3115	2875	3210
Engine/drive		inline-4/rwd	inline-5/twd	inline-4/rwd
Transmission		4-sp + OD	5-sp M	5-sp M
0-60 mph, sec		8.4	11.2	16.2
Standing ¼ mi, sec @ mph		16.6 @ 85.5	18.0 @ 76.5	20.3 @ 67.0
Stopping distance from 60 mph, ft		169	160	170
Lateral acceleration, g		0.75	0.76	0.71
Slalom speed, mph		55.9	59.9	56.3
Fuel economy, mpg		24.0	20.5 ¹	18.5 ¹
	Pro	Con		
740 Turbo Wagon:	remarkable power, good fuel economy for performance, spacious accommodations, well finished	high price, conservative looks may not appeal to everyone		
5000S Wagon: tested 4-84	excellent handling, well finished, contemporary aero design	limited cargo capacity, modest power		
505S Wagon: tested 4-84	excellent ride, good cargo and people accommodations, likable French spirit	short on power and cornering grip, modest fuel mileage, scarce dealer network		

¹Trip fuel economy



Intercooled four has exceptionally good turbo response.

mph in 8.4 seconds and the quarter mile in 16.6. But the performance is deceptive; because of the Volvo's generous size and soundproofing, it doesn't feel fast on anything but full boost. You think you're cruising moderately but when you glance down at the speedometer, you see an unexpectedly high reading.

The instruments and the interior contribute to the usable, no-nonsense character of the car. The large analog dials (including a traditional clock) give direct information, especially appreciated at night. The all-black interior somehow avoids that heavy Teutonic feeling, credit perhaps going to softer, but still supportive, leather seats than the Germans are wont to use. The driver's and front passenger's seats are multi-adjustable, suiting almost every member of the staff, and long-term driving results in little fatigue.

The back is roomy, too, and even though a few dimensions of the 740 wagon are smaller than on the older model, the total interior volume is greater. There is a much appreciated low sill with the rear door up, and the back seats fold one-third/two-thirds for passenger and cargo versatility. If the Volvo's 70.0 cu ft of cargo volume are not enough, there is an optional stream-lined roofpack that will take skis and other extra gear with only a modest aerodynamic penalty. It's a high-style item, too, bound to become a must for the visibly active set.

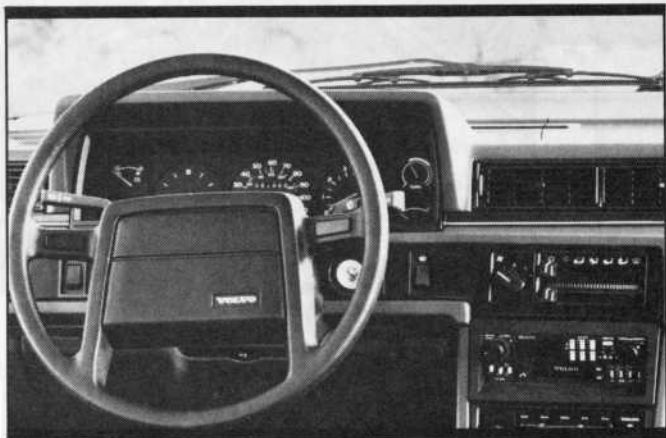
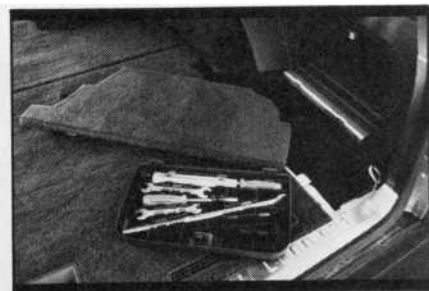
In what is really a luxury wagon, it is surprising to find hand-adjustable side mirrors and a crank-open sunroof (even if they work perfectly well) and not to find a vanity mirror on the passenger's sun visor (there's one in the glovebox). Except for a few cheap pieces on the center console, the materials are of high quality throughout, and fit and finish are excellent. Overall, this is one of the finest wagon packages ever put together. As a family car, it's superb. Warmed-up apple pie, à la mode. As one staff

member put it, probably the best car for a family vacation.

But what about the enthusiast driver, or the photographer who needs a fast chase car for an on-the-road assignment? Here, too, the Volvo does a fine job. It's no sports sedan, not being a sedan, but if there is such a thing as a 5-door sports wagon, this is it. Fairly softly sprung, with some body lean and a jiggly motion on highway irregularities, it nevertheless gives great confidence on a variety of road surfaces, especially smooth ones. Absolute roadholding is good-0.758 on the skidpad-and the handling, which includes a respectable slalom speed of 55.9 mph and a commendably small turning radius, could hardly be bettered for a car of such all-around usefulness. Braking is also sure, with little fade and very good control in panic stops, although the stopping distances aren't particularly short.

The gearbox, though a tiny bit notchy if the clutch is not fully depressed, works very well. The four ratios are well spaced, with an overdrive 5th obtainable by a button on the shift knob. Using the button alone will give slightly clunky up and downshifts; the trick is to use the clutch pedal as on any regular change. With the 3.54:1 final drive the 0.80 overdrive gives 24.0 mph/ 1000 rpm, fine for cruising, but 4th is needed for steep grades. The engine, otherwise respectably smooth and quiet, will boom if lugged below 2000 rpm.

We liked this car a lot. For all-around use, probably better than any wagon we've ever tested. What's the catch? None, if you're affluent. If you have \$21,340 to spend, the Volvo 740 Turbo Wagon is certainly worth it. It has no competition in its price class-the Audi and Peugeot are less expensive, the Mercedes-Benz considerably more. For the driving enthusiast with substantial goods or a hip family to transport, the Volvo does the job.



Cargo bed, with one-third/two-thirds seat split and large rear gate, is superbly loadable. Small compartment at rear corner hides tool kit.