

Volvo C303: The Original Volvo Cross Country

By Jan Nystrom, Editor of Rolling Magazine, [Volvo Club of America](#)'s print publication
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The Volvo Cross Country name does not come from the Volvo **XC70 Cross Country** or the **XC90** SUV. It comes from the C300 series of all-terrain vehicles introduced by Volvo Trucks in the 70s as a successor to the C202 Laplander (in Sweden called Valpen, which means 'the puppy').

Keep in mind that when the V70 Cross Country wagon was introduced in 1997, Volvo Cars and Volvo Trucks were both part of Volvo AB. It was in 1999 that Ford Motor Company bought Volvo Cars.

In the late 60s, the Swedish Army started looking for a new allterrain vehicle. The Swedish terrain is tremendously varied and the military demands were high. There was a call for an amphibious version, and increased load and seating capacity. The design job was given to Nils Magnus "Måns" Hartelius, who had created the Laplander.

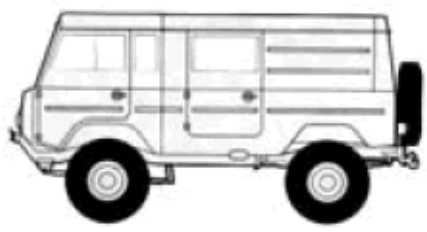
Work began in 1967. Initially there was a two-, a three-, and a four-axle version, however, the four-axle 8x8 was dropped after only a single prototype was built. Unfortunately the prototype was dismantled.

The two-axle C303 version was broader than the Laplander, which had a tendency to tip over. The prototype was equipped with the B20 engine, whereas the three-axle C306 had the B30 straight-six, 3-liter engine from the 164. When production began in 1974, the C303 was equipped with the B30 as well.

Paris-Dakar Desert Rally

In 1983 two teams from Volvo Trucks entered the Paris-Dakar desert rally. Hasse Henriksson, Sture Bernhardsson, and John Granäng managed to win the light trucks class (up to 10 tons total weight). They placed second of all trucks and 20th overall. Winner of all classes was the veteran racer Jacky Ickx and his navigator Bresseur in a Mercedes G-wagen.

The Volvo entries were two C303 in almost stock configuration. Notice the external roll bar in the picture. They were also equipped with additional 80 gallon gas tanks, communication radios, and cylinder heads



Volvo C303



Volvo C306

adopted for the low-octane gas found in Africa. Navigational equipment such as clocks and trip meters were added to the instrumentation.

The winning C303 is on display in the Volvo Museum in Gothenburg. Hasse Henriksson was back in 1986, in a Swedish-Greek team together with Athanare Papadimitriou and Börje Rosvall, again driving a stock C303. This time they placed fifth amongst all trucks and second in the light trucks class.



Photo courtesy of the Volvo Historical Archive.



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Additional C303 Photography



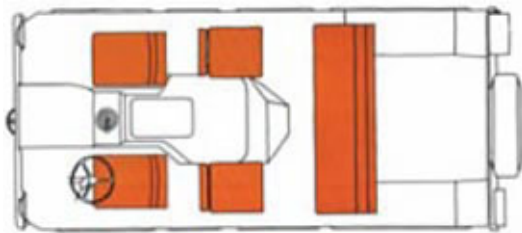
This 1979 C306 firetruck, with PTO powered hydraulics and water pump, electric winch mountable front and back, is owned by Jeff Lenzner, Clatskanie, Oregon. It was previously an airport fire service truck in Arvidsjaur in northern Sweden. Features crew cab seating for five, engageable front and rear differential locks and six-wheel drive. Top speed is 60 mph. Jeff imports firetrucks and military vehicles from Europe. The C306 is currently for sale on eBay. It has 16,000 miles on the odometer. Photo courtesy of Jeff Lenzner.



Volvo 8x8 that never was. The four-axle version was dropped after only a single prototype was built. The prototype was dismantled.

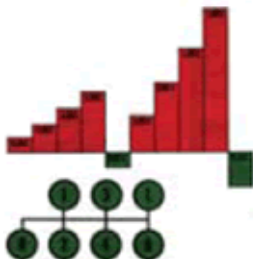
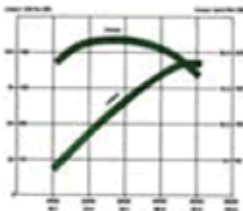


Nick Fleetwood on expedition with his Volvo C-306. Here he is negotiating the easy part of the Garburn Pass, near Lake Windermere in the Lake District National Park, England. Photo courtesy of Nick Fleetwood.



Powerful engine

The Volvo C 303 is powered by a 3 liter six-cylinder in-line carburettor engine. The torque curve is very flat. It is almost constant from 900 rpm and up to 4300 rpm. This enables a smooth and stable driving off road and reduces the need for gear changing. Output is 90 kW (125 hp) DIN. At 1470 kg gross weight the power weight ratio is as high as 36 hp/ton.



Transmission

The Volvo C 303 has a fully synchronized four-speed gearbox with a two-speed auxiliary gearbox. In other words there are eight forward speeds to choose between. The auxiliary gearbox is controlled by the ordinary gear lever, which has gear positions for high and low ranges to the right of the normal gear register.

There are three output shafts from the auxiliary gearbox - one for the rear axle, one for the front axle and one for the power take-off.

