

MINI COUNTRYMAN VS VOLVO XC40 COMPARISON Volvo's dash design is its own kind of quirky and quality is up there with the Mini.

← huge door bins - made possible by removing the lower doormounted speakers and replacing them with an in-dash subwoofer. I'm not so hot on the Lava Orange fabric door and footwell lining, but you don't have to have this colour equipped on your car.

The thing is, I really like the look of the Mini's interior too. As ever, there's a circular theme to the design elements, but unlike in the hatchback, some parts - like the AC vents - have been squared off for this crossover, and it suits it just fine. Then there are the toggle switches for everything from the cabin lights to the starter button, and the ring of contextsensitive LEDs on the dashboard that light up differently in different situations. Customisation has become synonymous with Minis and it's easy to spend a lot more on top of the sticker price to personalise your car. However, since the Countryman is the only Mini to be assembled in India, unlike the rest of the range, you cannot customise it at all! You get three fixed configurations, comprising trim and equipment, and this diesel Cooper SD is the middle of the range.

FEEL-GOOD FACTOR

Here's where things get interesting

though, as there are some aesthetic choices (non-customisable, of course) that you have to live with - like smaller 17-inch wheels and a rather dull-looking, grey plastic dash trim. The equipment list too is a mixed bag - while they've given it some feel-good features like a panoramic sunroof, a powered tailgate and powered front seats with memory, it misses out on others that you'd expect at this price. There are, for instance, no paddleshifters and no rear-view camera, and the touchscreen is a smaller, 6.5-inch unit, as opposed to the 8.8 inches on the higher trim.

When it comes to feel-good

features - actually, any kind of features - there are cars twice the price that can't even come close to the Volvo XC40. Heated seats, front and rear, are good if you live someplace where it gets cold in winter, Android Auto and Apple CarPlay are on hand to hook up your smartphone and there's even a digital instrument cluster. The real ace up the Volvo's sleeve is its bank of active and passive safety features - auto emergency braking, lane-keeping assist, blind-spot monitoring, road sign recognition, pedestrian detection, cross-traffic warning. It even has semiautonomous driving which will drive the car for you provided the

road is neatly marked out. Granted, a lot of this isn't really useful on Indian roads, but it's just incredible to see it on a Rs 45-lakh SUV.

THE S IN SUV

But while it could drive itself, the XC40 is pretty nice when you're doing the driving too. It's certainly got the numbers - a 2.0-litre diesel engine with 190hp and 400Nm sounds right on the money for a crossover of this size, and power is put to the road via an 8-speed automatic gearbox and all-wheel drive. That gearbox is perhaps the weakest link of this powertrain, however; it's a bit lazy with its responses and the shifts them >





Diesel Countryman gets smaller 6.5in screen, but it works well. Touchscreen is superb but too many basic functions rely on it.





	Mini Cooper SD Countryman	Volvo XC40 D4 R-Design
Price (ex-showroom, Delhi)	Rs 37.40 lakh	Rs 42.90 lakh
EQUIPMENT CHECKLIST		
Touchscreen	6.5-inch	9.0-inch
Digital instrument cluster	NA	-
Apple CarPlay, Android Auto	NA NA	■/ ■
Parking sensors (f/r)		
Rear-view camera	NA	-
Panoramic sunroof		
Powered front seats w/memory		
Powered tailgate		
Rear AC vents		
Heated seats (f/r)	NA/NA	=/=
Gearshift paddles	NA	
Autonomous driving (Level 2)	NA	_
Active lane-keeping assist	NA	

← selves aren't the quickest. Still, it's not so bad once you get into a rhythm, and provided you aren't flooring it, it makes smooth and effortless progress. It's easy to settle into a brisk gallop, if not a frenzied sprint.

The Mini has no trouble sprinting. It too uses a 2.0-litre diesel with 190hp and 400Nm, but the way it goes, you'd think there was a fair bit more. Power goes only through the front tyres, too, but it's enough to let the Countryman SD scoot from 0-100kph in just 7.55sec. The Volvo, by comparison, takes a leisurely 9.54sec. The differences are even more stark when you're

trying to overtake, because the Mini's 8-speed gearbox (the same ZF unit used in the BMW X1) is just brilliant and quick to react to a twitch of your toe. 20-80kph and 40-100kph in kickdown are despatched in 4.52sec and 6.30sec, respectively, which take 6.05sec and 7.12sec in the Volvo, but in practice, the difference feels even greater than the numbers suggest.

ATHLETICS

The Mini is the fun handler too. Its steering feels a tad too heavy in town, but you will be so grateful for it on a nice road. It's nice and communicative, the weight feels



good when you're going fast, and it's really quick and accurate. Body control, too, is just superb, and it doesn't feel too much larger than any of the Mini hatchbacks once you start to press on with it. You do get a bit of torque steer when you're really flooring it, but once you've learned to drive around it, it can actually be quite a lot of fun. The downside to this incredible agility is that the suspension has been set up a bit too firm, and in everyday use, you might not like how much it thunks and crashes through bumps.

The Volvo's ride is just superb. No adaptive dampers, certainly



You can't opt for larger wheels on this Mini.



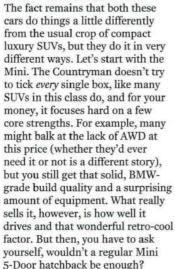




XC40 gear lever is fiddly to operate.

no air springs - just an incredibly well-judged suspension. And despite riding on the larger wheels in this test, it's still got some pretty high-profile tyres, and the XC40 could sail over a rough road with far less interference in the cabin. The handling is not electrifying, but like the performance, it's tidy. There is body roll, but not enough to make you want to slow down to a crawl, and what it lacks in outright sharpness, it makes up for with a steering that feels wonderfully fluid to operate. It's hard to describe, but this is a car you'd be more than happy to just drive at '50 percent'.



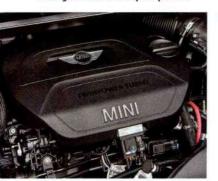


The Volvo is more expensive and it's not as fun to drive. People might even be wary of Volvo's dealership and service network – though it has grown vastly in the last 12 months. But, for those few lakhs

more, it's astonishing what the Volvo gives you. Yes, some of it is a little gimmicky, but a lot of it is very useful, especially the safety kit. And more than anything else, there's high-tech stuff that you won't find in some cars that cost over a crore, and there's a certain feel-good factor that you simply want when you're parting with this kind of money on what is, at the end of the day, a relatively compact vehicle.

But the Volvo gets the basics right too – it's incredibly comfortable to sit in, effortless to drive and scores high on space and practicality too. And if the price is really a downer for you, you can get the lesser 'Momentum' variant (you only lose the self-driving tech and Harman/Kardon sound system) which is priced closer to the Mini.

And that's really why the XC40 wins this comparison test, because it manages to be different (and greater) than the others, without skimping on the fundamentals. The Mini has its own distinct identity too, but some things have been compromised along the way, so while it is a very focused car, it simply falls into too small a niche. The Volvo, then, is more car to more people – a left-field choice that just also happens to be the best car in the class.



Mini powertrain packs a solid punch.



Volvo gets semi-autonomous self-drive.

	Mini Countryman SD	Volvo XC40 D4 R-Design
VERDICT	Fun and stylish driver's car but not enough of an SUV.	A compact luxury SUV that does just about everything.
RATING	*******	*****
L/W/H	4299/1822/1557mm	4425/1863/1652mm OUT
Wheelbase	2670mm	2702mm CHOIC
Engine	4 cyl, 1995cc, turbo-diesel	4 cyl, 1969cc, turbo-diesel
Power	190hp at 4000rpm	190hp at 4000rpm
Torque	400Nm at 1750rpm	400Nm at 1750rpm
Gearbox	8-speed automatic	8-speed automatic
Tyre size	225/55 R17	235/55 R18
PERFORMANCE	Acceleration (from rest)	Acceleration (from rest)
Kph	Sec	Sec
20	1.06	0.82
40	2.25	2.37
60	3.58	4.09
80	5.29	6.60
100	7.55	9.54
120	10.57	13.11
140	14.33	15.48
160	18.94	21.16
180	25.34	34.61
20-80 (in kickdown)	4.52	6.05
40-100 (in kickdown)	6.30	7.12
Price (ex-showroom, Delhi)	Rs 37.40 lakh	Rs 42.90 lakh