

GAME CHANGER

The all-new Volvo XC40 sports utility vehicle will give the three major German car manufacturers, Audi, BMW and Mercedes-Benz, a run for their money in the compact luxury SUV segment, writes P Tharyan

The Volvo plant in the port district of Ghent in western Belgium has been witnessing a lot of action of late. Ever since the XC40, a compact luxury SUV, was launched globally in late 2017, production at this plant has been ramped up as a result of massive global demand. The same plant will now be catering to the Indian market when it begins exporting the XC40 to India.

It was well past 2 pm when I landed in Hyderabad to test drive the XC40. With only a few hours to sundown, I had to quickly finish the drive and also wrap up the shoot. So as soon as I was handed the keys, I drove off towards a national highway with my cameraperson in the tracking car in hot pursuit.

The 2.0-litre, four-cylinder diesel engine, mated to an 8-speed automatic gearbox, is loaded with energy. The power delivery is smooth and the turbo kicks in very early. Although diesel mills are notorious for their terrible clattering, I could barely hear the engine. The cabin and the bonnet

areas are insulated perfectly to keep the noise out.

I looked at the 9-inch touch panel on the dashboard and decided to change the drive mode. I had been driving on Comfort mode but it was time to test the vehicle's brute power. The road ahead was broad and traffic was almost non-existent. I opted for Dynamic mode and stepped on the accelerator. Within a few seconds, I was well past the 200kmph mark. The paddle shifts help you accelerate even more quickly. Other modes include Eco, Off Road and Individual, and the throttle response and suspension settings change according to the drive mode.

The brakes are very accurate and instill a lot of confidence in the driver in this all-wheel drive. The Volvo also comes with a plethora of radar-based safety features, such as lane-keeping assist, blind spot warning, adaptive cruise control, pilot assist and emergency braking. Other safety features include ESP, traction control and hill descent control. The car also comes with multiple airbags. There's also a feature for auto park-in and park-out, which reduced the

hassle of parking.

The Volvo XC40 is the company's first SUV to be based on the Compact Modular Architecture platform, which is shared with its parent company Zhejiang Geely Holding of China. In India, this premium compact SUV will be pitted against the likes of the Audi Q3, the Mercedes Benz GLA and the BMW X1. The Volvo XC40 will only be offered in one variant initially, a fully-loaded R-Design.

The XC40 looks every bit a Volvo with its signature front grille all blacked out, the vertical slats, the logo in the centre and the headlamps with the Thor's hammer LED DRLs. The car stands grand on 18-inch-twin 5-spoke alloy wheels shrouded in 235/55 Pirelli tyres. The roof rails, prominent wheel arches and black cladding at the sides give the vehicle a sporty look. It also has a huge panoramic sunroof. The rear tail-lamps and the dual chrome exhausts, along with the integrated spoiler, give the XC40 a distinct Volvo appeal.

Within the cabin, the dashboard and doors with silver trims, the steering wheel, the digital

instrument cluster, the vertical air vents bordered in chrome, the well-crafted knobs and the 9-inch vertical touchscreen, all have a rich flair about them. The car will be offered in a choice of three colours. The cabin will have a choice of either black or lava orange in the bottom section. I personally would stick to black because orange will get dirtied as you step in and out. The plastics used in the cabin are of decent quality.

The 9-inch touchscreen controls all the functions of the car and features Android Auto and Apple CarPlay, the Harman Kardon audio system does justice to the luxury tag. Features like an electric tailgate, driving modes, auto LED headlamps, four heated seats, dual-zone climate control, front and rear parking sensors and reversing camera are all standard on the XC40 R-Design.

The cabin has spacious storage, especially with the inner panel door cavities. There is ample storage in the front as well, with even a slot to charge your mobile phone wirelessly. The armrest console is large with a cleverly-designed removable dustbin that comes with



VOLVO XC40 R-DESIGN

Engine: D4 2.0-litre, in-line 4-cylinder twin-turbo diesel; 1,969cc

Torque: 450Nm

Power: 190hp

Transmission: 8-speed Geartronic automatic

Top Speed: 210kmph

Price: ₹3.9 million



a spring-loaded lid. Tucked-away storage areas include one under the driver's seat where one can fit a phone or a tablet. The rear seats are 60:40 split and bringing them down creates more storage space. The boot has 460 litres of luggage space with additional space between the boot floor and the spare wheel area.

The compact luxury SUV segment in India will not be the same with the entry of the XC40. Has Volvo Cars set the cat among the pigeons? By the look and feel of it, Volvo Car India has a compact winner on its hands.

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