

First Drive | Volvo XC40

# BIG LITTLE SWEDE

Volvo's smallest compact SUV is finally here. How did the cool Nordic creation handle the hot Indian summer? We've drove it in Hyderabad.

Story: Jim Gorde Photography: Sanjay Raikar

**T**HE SWEDES HAVE A WAY OF MAKING things last. No, this isn't about Ikea or Amon Amarth's "The Pursuit of Vikings" that has been my phone ringtone for the past decade. Volvo ate properly Swedish at heart and it shows in everything from their understated and elegant design to the thoughtful layouts that form their interior. The first XC40, in fact, was around for more than a decade. It was hugely practical and had several innovative features. Yet, it aged, and with just a few touch-ups and some revised engines, it was calling for an overhaul. The next one arrived in 2015 and that was all that Volvo needed. Sales graph soared, and a new design language, not to mention product

architecture, laid the groundwork for future success. Then came the new XC60, along with the announcement of a new platform for compact cars — CMA (Compact Modular Architecture) — and the first-ever XC40. This is it!

First, though, seeing how Volvo have fared over the past decade or so they've been here, they've been brand-building-and-a-half, adding dealer partners, and, more recently, opening a parts warehouse — a move that will significantly cut turnaround time. But, the question is, will you choose a Volvo over its other premium rivals? How much value do you place on a badge? Is it more than the value of a considerable number of features that none of the others offer, some of which aren't even available internationally? >



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### VOLVO XC40 D4 AWD R-DESIGN

Price: Rs 40 lakh (estimated)

Engine: 1,969 cc, in-line four, turbo-diesel

Max Power: 190 PS at 4,000 rpm

Max Torque: 400 Nm at 1,750-2,500 rpm

Transmission: Eight-speed, automatic, all-wheel drive

Weight: 1,740 kg (approx)



(Above) 'Lava' interior trim sure looks hot

(Right) Drive modes include a configurable 'Individual' mode  
(Far Right) Wireless charging pad uses a 5W induction charger

The XC40 is built from the ground up, on the all-new CMA platform that's built for the future — Volvo get a flexible architecture, and buyers get to choose combustion engine, plug-in hybrid, or full electric. Their intent was making the car's powertrain as easy to pick and choose as a choice of paint and interior. Safe to say, they're well on their way. For now, the XC40 arrives with a turbo-diesel engine, and a host of customisation choices, including dual-tone paint finishes, a variety of interior trims and colours. And, we drove it in India this time.

The XC40 D4 AWD R-Design is the only variant on offer, and it's a great way to start. The sporty design is evident from the outset, and the package provides several details, little and large, that make the whole thing stand out. True, the palette may be rather popular, but the XC40 holds its own, and very well.

The first element that stands out are the Mjólnir or 'Thor's Hammer' headlamps, more so on the sparkling metallic-red paint



finish. Although tweaked and slightly sharper, they're just as stunning. The 'Concept 40.1' has stayed true to its form and delivered some modern lines with bold sections. The balance of metal and glass is something to appreciate and it works wonders with the shapely lines. The XC40, in India, wears 235/55 R18 Pirelli P-Zero VOLS with stylish 18-inch alloy wheels. Options up to 20-inch are available. The smart LED headlamps are complemented by the LED tail-lamp cluster and the standard hands-free power tail-gate.

Get inside, and the interior is a mix of black leather and metal — just how I like it. Yet, there's room for personalisation. The new "Lava" interior trim for the doors and carpeting stands out. Volvo say this will be a choice for buyers. That's only the tip of the Nordic iceberg. The XC40 brings in a slew of safety features — camera and radar-based ones included — with the list comprising the IntelliSafe suite, Collision Mitigation, Adaptive Cruise Control, Steering Assist for Lane-keep and oncoming crash mitigation, Run-



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from slow. In Off-road mode — which lasts only up to about 35 km/h, before switching to the previous drive mode — the XC40 gives added confidence. Even with ESC in sport mode, accessible via the tablet interface, it behaves well and feels enjoyable letting loose in the mud. The torque distribution is reassuring indeed, and made for quick changes in direction even on the loose dirt.

Overall, the XC40 is built to be an all-rounder. Like I've said before, car companies are making now making cars for people who don't know what they want, yet want everything possible, and in one form. This gives rise to ridiculous-looking contraptions that don't do anything 100 per cent and just improvise in every way imaginable. However, when it comes to owning a compact car that shares more than genes and a badge with its more expensive siblings, with a lot more equipment than just a faux leather interior, a sunroof and a chromed badge on the steering wheel, the XC40 truly stands out head, shoulders and roof-rails over the competition. This is a serious car and not an exercise in badge-engineering for those with lofty ambitions but pockets not deep enough. It is aimed at the millennial buyer, who will, in all probability, face all sorts of road conditions, some rough-road conditions, ice, snow, mud, some steep slopes, and want something to tackle it all with aplomb, without having their bank balance take a hit or face the possibility of an incapable car lacking in essential safety features. Volvo have delivered yet again. The new XC40 may be small when it comes to size, but it's big on everything else. 

### SAFETY FIRST

The Volvo XC40 may be late to the compact luxury SUV party but it comes packing some serious ammo, enough to annihilate its existing opposition on paper, on the road, and off the road as well. What's really path-breaking? Here is the list of the features that you won't find in any competitor car, or even several other cars this side of Rs 60 lakh

#### Adaptive Cruise Control

This cruise control is radar-based and lets you set the speed and distance. The XC40 will follow the car in front, automatically slow down, brake, and speed up depending on traffic ahead. It can also be stationary and accelerate again in stop-and-go traffic. The system works from standstill to high triple-digit speeds.

#### Lane-keeping Aid

So long as there are lines on the road, the XC40 will actively keep itself between the lane-markings, should the driver, on their part, fail to do so.

#### Collision Mitigation

A part of the evolution of the first-generation City Safety with auto brake and audio-visual warning, the

collision mitigation system prevents an imminent crash should the driver fail to respond in time. The system works from parking speeds to triple-digits, braking as much as possible within as little distance to minimise damage from the impact, if any.

#### Oncoming Collision Mitigation

Another world-first, as with lane-keeping aid, the XC40 will actively steer out of the way should it detect an oncoming vehicle in its path.

#### Active Bending Lights

Full-LED headlamps that change direction with the steering wheel to provide significantly better illumination around bends or in corners.

