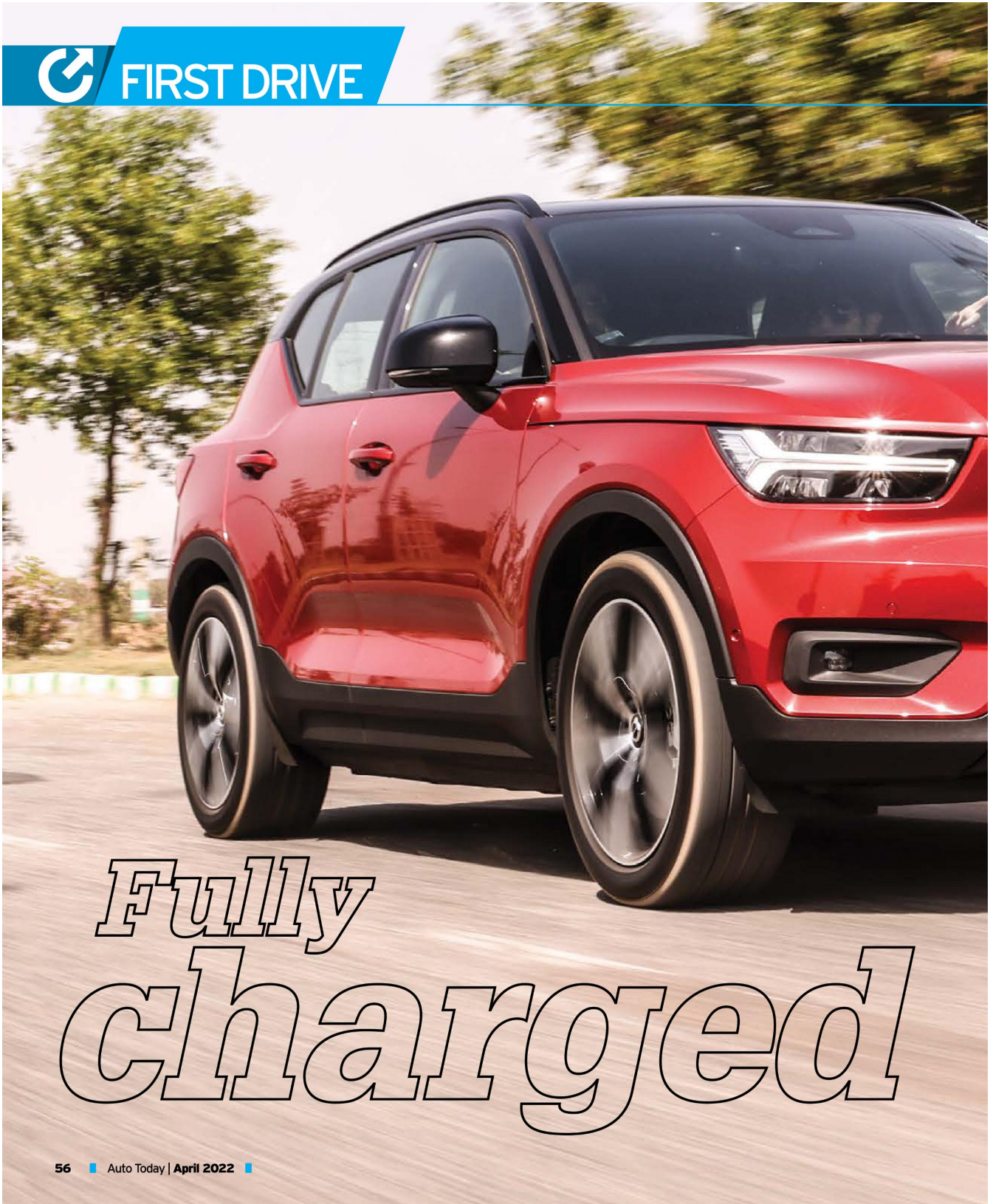




FIRST DRIVE



*Fully
charged*



One of the best premium compact SUVs now gets an electric powertrain that offers electrifying performance and a very practical range, at least on paper. We get behind the wheel and take it for a day-long spin to find out whether it delivers

The XC40 has been one of the best premium compact SUVs not only in our country but also around the world. It won the inaugural Premium Car Award 2019 by ICOTY, the biggest Indian award for premium and luxury vehicles


while abroad it won the European Car of the Year Award. It was also the first car made on Volvo's new gen Compact Modular Architecture and that meant that it was ready for full electrification from day one.


Volvo had announced the launch of the


electric version of the XC40 in India last year but the uncertainties and disruptions caused by COVID meant that bookings are only going to open in the middle of this year followed by deliveries in the second half of the year. However that means that buy-





IT HAS 408BHP OF MAX POWER COMBINED WITH 660NM OF PEAK TORQUE AND THAT GIVES IT SPORTS CAR LIKE PERFORMANCE INCLUDING A RUN FROM 0 TO 100KMPH OF UNDER 5 SECONDS

Volvo XC40 Recharge	
	Motor 2x150kW permanent magnet
	Power 406bhp
	Torque 660Nm
	Gearbox Single-speed, AWD

	Wheelbase(mm) 2,702
	LxWxH (mm) 4,400x1,863x1,652

	Battery 78kWh, Li-ion
	Range 418km (claimed)

	Top Speed 180kmph
	0-100kmph 4.9 seconds

	Price: Rs 70-75 lakh (estimated)
	On sale July 2022

ers will get the facelifted car that will come with leather free upholstery and interiors as well as Apple CarPlay that is missing from the Google powered interfaces that the car runs. We however drove the pre-facelift cars and were quite amazed at what the car offers in terms of performance and dynamics as well as the overall package that is even better than the ICE XC40.

As far as the looks and design goes, the Recharge is identical to its fossil fuel powered sibling except for the front end that gets a flat face instead of the grille, some badging and new 19in alloys specially made for electric cars. That gives it a more purposeful and defining look that brackets it as an EV at first glance. That apart, there is badging also on the sides and at the rear that point to its electric antecedents. The dimensions of the car are also near identical and that means the interior space has also not been compromised as the battery-pack goes under the floor. Boot space at just over 400 litres is somewhat compromised though at 414 litres, but the frunk somewhat makes up for that with an additional 31 litres under the bonnet up front.

Volvo had gone clean and minimalist on the interiors with its new gen cars and that theme is carried forward to the near identical interiors of the Recharge. There is a large



Likes
Performance, range, infotainment

Dislike
Harsh low speed ride

9in vertical touchscreen paired with the 12.3in display for the all digital instrument panel. The infotainment system as well as the car interface is powered by Google's Android like it is in all new Volvo and with the announcement last year of the extension of the partnership, will continue to be as Volvo moves towards a new era of electric mobility. For us Indians who predominantly use Android phones and with nearly everyone using Google maps, this is a big plus. And since Google maps is integrated with the software of the car, navigating to a certain place will also predict and display the amount of battery charge remaining on reaching the destination along with the usual time taken and arrival time.

The best part of the car though is what one can



Electric powertrain frees up space under the bonnet which hides a 31-litre storage space. Recharge Twin badge signifies the all-electric twin-motor setup underneath which also gives the XC40 BEV all-wheel drive capabilities and electrifying performance that's comparable to sports cars

COMPETITION CHECK



Jaguar i-Pace
MOTOR 2 electric motors **POWER** 394bhp
TORQUE 696Nm **PRICE** ₹ 1.12 crore



1. The dashboard is nearly identical to the XC40 petrol R-Design. The car that will be delivered to customers will boast leather-free upholstery. 2. There's a fully-digital instrument console that also beams navigation data from the in-built Google Maps. 3. Wireless smartphone charger one of the many features one would expect from a luxury car at this price point. 4. There is no engine start/stop button. The car is good to go once you get in, press the brake and shift to D

DIMENSIONS ARE NEARLY IDENTICAL TO THE PETROL XC40 AND THAT MEANS INTERIOR SPACE HASN'T BEEN COMPROMISED AS THE BATTERY GOES UNDER THE FLOOR

not see. Hidden under the floor is a 78kWh lithium-ion battery pack that powers two 150kW motors, one on each axle, effectively making it a 4WD vehicle. With both the motors working in tandem, the XC40 Recharge has 408bhp of max power on tap combined with 660Nm of peak torque. That gives it sportscar like performance figures including a run from 0 to 100kmph of under 5 seconds.

While we have been saying repeatedly that this XC40 is near identical to ones not bearing the Recharge badge, there are crucial differences – no engine to start so no start button. The electronics switch on when the car is opened and it is ready to

go. Just shifting into D and stepping on the accelerator does it. That this would be a very quick car was something that we knew as soon as we looked at the figures on paper. What is even more impressive is how it translates that on to the road. It has a nice balance even while accelerating and even on not the best of tarmacs, a lot of the torque can actually be used to make a quick getaway despite its over two tonne kerb weight. To drive it does not feel that heavy and the steering is light, making it easy to manoeuvre in the city. There is an option of firming up the steering if one so desires and also adding more regeneration by moving into what is



Space saver in the boot rather than under the floor eats into the 414-litre capacity. 19in alloy wheels different from the petrol variant's and have been designed with aerodynamic efficiency in mind

effectively a single pedal drive mode. The ride, though on the stiff side is perfect for going fast over not so great surfaces though one does come to notice the weight of the car when it crashes into potholes.

What is missing though are multiple regeneration modes that a car of this performance should have offered. There is also a single motor version available worldwide but that is currently not on offer in India and would have offered increased range, a lower level of performance at a slightly lower price.

The range though does not seem to be a problem. We drove nearly 250km on a mix of city roads and highways with bouts of spirited driv-

ing thrown in and still had enough range to do close to another 100km. That is in tune with the claimed WLTP range of 418km certified for the SUV and should be enough for city requirements anywhere in the country. Though the battery pack can be charged from near zero to 80 per cent in under 40 minutes that is possible only on a DC 150kW fast charger. Unfortunately, we don't have any of them around in India yet. By contrast, plug it into a wall socket at home or office and one can forget about the car for the entire weekend and some more. The best solution in that case would be to have a three phase AC wallbox installed and a 11kW one will fully recharge the electric SUV overnight, in 8-10 hours. ⚡

VERDICT

The XC40 was the one compact premium SUV that ticked all the boxes and its electric version, the Recharge adds a few more ticks to the list and reinforces a few others. With sports-car like performance, a very reassuring range, Volvo's new age interiors and interfaces, the familiarity of Google's Android system powering the interfaces and updating just like it would with a smartphone, Volvo's commitment to safety that can be seen on all its cars, there is very little to dislike about the car. But with a big battery pack and all the inbuilt systems, the price is also going to be with a comfortable premium on what the fossil fueled SUV is sold at. However, though there are more than a few electric vehicles available in India now, they are spread out on the two far ends of the spectrum and the XC40 recharge may find a comfortable place for it in between.



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