

Driven



VOLVO XC40 RECHARGE

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# Volvo XC40 Recharge

Volvo's first ever EV is based on the compact XC40, but it goes bonkers in terms of performance!

**V**OLVO HAS MADE A MASSIVE commitment — of going fully electric by 2030. And it isn't some marketing spiel to make them look like a responsible company, they have signed the Glasgow Declaration at the UN Climate Change conference COP26, and have committed to making it happen. It's just one of the steps they are taking to become climate neutral by 2040. What does that mean for you and me? Well, it means we're going to be seeing a lot of BEVs from Volvo, the first being this one — the XC40 Recharge. And I'm all for it. Because here's a compact 'family car' that casually puts out

over 400bhp. Yep, that's what Volvo decided was appropriate for the XC40 Recharge and that's what you're going to get should you choose to buy one. How ridiculous is it to drive, you ask?

#### Plenty ridiculous

It all starts with how you set off. There's no start/stop button here. Instead, you just sit in the car, put a foot on the brake, pull the gear selector to D and you can start moving. Stopping is even easier. Slot it in to P and get out — the car will simply turn off on its own. Super intuitive, and you don't need to figure out if the car is 'ready' or not.

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What is really insane is the performance on tap though. Each motor puts out a cool 201bhp leaving the total system output at a mildly ridiculous 402bhp. It matches larger EVs like the Mercedes-Benz EQC and Audi e-tron in terms of outputs, and is essentially the same drivetrain as the Polestar 2. Combine those power figures with AWD and fat tyres, and you've got a 0-100kmph coming up in a claimed 4.9 seconds. It launches super aggressively. It slams you in to your seat back and fires itself forward, hitting triple-digit speeds in no time and showing no signs of slowing down. Even at rolling speeds, if you're aggressive with the throttle, it just darts forward with intent. More impressive than the acceleration is the instantaneous response. There's no lag — you put in an input, and it moves. Top speed is limited to 180kmph — a global mandate from Volvo to enhance safety

**Above:** Not much to tell apart the Recharge from the standard car from the rear. **Below:** Good space at the back but bench lacks high support



though there's no getting to that number safely on Indian roads so I didn't even try.

The XC40 Recharge doesn't really have traditional drive modes. There's an off-road mode that optimises the drivetrain for low traction surfaces, though you really have to dig through the menus to find. What was really interesting was the one-pedal drive mode. What it essentially does is decelerate the car when you're off the throttle and recover energy in the process. You don't need to use the brakes — just anticipate when you need to slow down and get off the throttle, and you can drive the car with just the throttle pedal. However, I found the deceleration very aggressive. With some practice, you can drive smoothly but what you can't do is alter the rate of deceleration when off the accelerator. I would have liked some adjustability here.



**Clockwise from below:** The XC40 Recharge looks unassuming but packs a punch; cluster has EV-specific updates; one pedal mode is useful but allows for no adjustability; cabin is a familiar space



### Juice up

The Volvo XC40's claimed range is 461km on the WLTP cycle. On our test run, we had a lot of highway driving — which involved high speeds between 80 and 120kmph, and plenty of bursts of acceleration. We managed somewhere around 4.25kW/km which translates to approximately 350km of real world range driving. I suspect that in mixed conditions which balance city and highway driving, you can stretch this to 400km. This is impressive range, and should allow the XC40 Recharge to be more than just an urban car. As for charging, the XC40 can go from 10-80 per cent in a mere 33min with a 150kW charger. Volvo hasn't confirmed what home charging solution it will provide yet, though we suspect an 11kW charger should be bundled in and charging here should take 7-8 hours.

### India ready

When I saw the spec of the XC40, I expected it to be stiff. And yet, the XC40 impresses! It actually deals with Indian roads very capably. Ride quality isn't overly plush, but it is comfortable and it manages to iron out the imperfections in our road without being uncomfortable. This is a car that is genuinely

**It slams you in to your seat back and fires itself forward, hitting triple-digit speeds in no time**

useable every day. Despite the large wheels, it doesn't have a hard edge to the ride and can take on everything from potholes to bumps and broken roads very well. It also has good ground clearance — despite the batteries in the floor, Volvo has managed to salvage 175mm of clearance and Indian road conditions leave it unbothered. If I had to criticise something about its ride, I would have to say that some amount of suspension noise does make it in to the cabin when dealing with bad roads.

On the handling front, it is a mixed bag. It has got outright grip. The wide Pirelli P Zeros mean you can chuck it around a bend and it will resist understeer very well. Traction out of corners is huge as well, and you can shoot yourself out of bends very rapidly. That said, you feel a bit disconnected from what's happening underneath. It lacks feedback from the steering

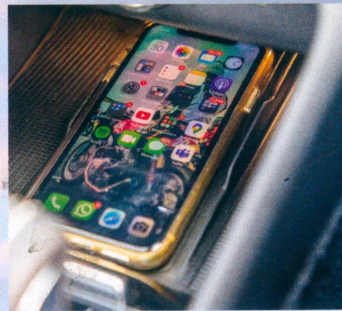
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### The XC40 is a handsome car that didn't need much tweaking to make it look futuristic

and the seat of your pants — as a driver, you feel a little isolated from what is happening and it doesn't involve you in the experience. It is effective, but not fun. That said, this car was never intended to deliver sportscar-like engagement (despite the sportscar like performance) so I would cut it some slack here.

#### Under the radar

Honestly, the Volvo XC40 Recharge looks very similar to the standard XC40 (that is still on sale, by the way). The major difference is no surprise — the grille, or rather the lack of it. There's also the shouty green plates that scream EV from a mile away. The large wheels with fat rubber give it a particularly handsome



stance. There's a subtle Recharge badge on the C-pillar and another on the boot. The fuel lid is no longer a fuel lid, but instead reveals a charging port and is positioned in the same place. Something you would not notice at first glance is the fact that it is longer overall by 15mm. It breeds familiarity, that is certain, and the XC40 is already a handsome car that didn't need much tweaking to make it look futuristic.

Like the exteriors, the changes to the insides are subtle. The big differences are to the infotainment screen and the instrument cluster. The infotainment screen now runs Google natively, allowing you to download apps like Maps and Spotify straight to it — something we first saw on the S90 and the XC60 facelifts not too long ago. iPhone owners, don't sweat, it will also be available with wireless Apple CarPlay when it launches in India. Then there's the 12-3-inch digital instrument cluster — it has a few EV-specific tweaks. The fuel gauge has been replaced with a gauge that shows the battery's

**Left:** Wireless phone charger will be a part of the standard equipment. **Above:** Vertically oriented screen the same, now runs a Google OS natively





charge levels in percentage. The tachometer has been replaced by a dial that displays how much power you're using or recovering.

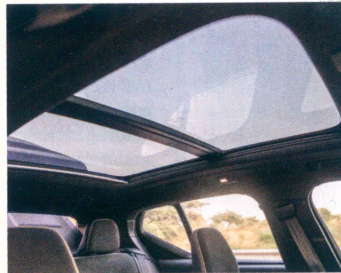
Those two things aside, the XC40 Recharge is pretty much identical to the standard car. Quality of materials used is top notch, as are fit and finish levels. It remains well-equipped too — 360-degree camera, electrically adjustable front seats, a panoramic sunroof, wireless charging, Harman Kardon audio, radar-enabled safety systems — the works.

When it comes to the backseat, it is a bit of a squeeze getting in because the door apertures are narrow. But once you're inside, there is actually a generous amount of knee room and headroom for such a small car. The bench lacks a bit of thigh support, aggravated by the fact that the floor is high but that aside, the rear is a fairly comfortable place to be.

#### On the money

Here's a confession. This isn't the exact spec that will be sold in India. Bookings will start in July 2022 with deliveries in October, and by that time, customers will get the facelifted XC40 that was just revealed a month ago. The facelift entails some mildly tweaked styling, trims and upholstery, and wheels — though the rest of the

**Above:** Charging port is exactly where the fuel filler cap was. **Below:** The Volvo XC40 Recharge gets a panoramic sunroof



car including the things that make a difference to the driving experience, remain the same.

Now coming to the price. It has a fairly large battery, (two) powerful motors and everything that comes with big power including bigger wheel brakes, tyres and better suspension. I suspect it will be around ₹65 lakh (ex-showroom) when it launches here later this year. The Volvo XC40 has a lot going for it. It is an incredible everyday EV that promises good range, comfort, a luxurious cabin, a long equipment list and serious performance. A lot of its success is down to its price. If it can undercut the luxury EVs around ₹1 crore — the EQC, I-Pace and e-tron — by a big enough margin, people will see value in it. That said, it remains a brilliant showcase of what is to come from Volvo. The XC40 Recharge is their first ever EV. The future can only be more exciting. ✕

**Battery** 78kWh, Li-ion **Motor** Two, PMSM **Power** 402bhp **Torque** 660Nm **Weight** NA **0-100kmph** NA **Top speed** 180kmph (limited) **Price** ₹65 lakh (estimated, ex-showroom)

⊕ Performance, range, compact size

📺 Handling

evo rating ★★★★★