

The wow effect

Does Volvo's XC40 have what it takes to be a volume seller?



By SHAPUR KOTWAL

The all-new XC40 is Volvo's newest compact SUV that's funky, stylish and feature-rich, and it's here with all guns blazing to take on the BMW X1, Audi Q3 and Mercedes-Benz GLA. Volvo is so optimistic it has already stocked its yards with inventory. Is it truly that good?

This is the first SUV based on the CMA (Compact Modular Architecture) platform, shared with its parent company Geely Auto. It still shares the engine, gearbox, infotainment, safety kit and some other bits with cars like the XC90, S90 and XC60 based on SPA (Scalable Product Architecture), so the lines blur.

Let's size it up

The XC40 is longer, wider and taller than the Audi Q3, and has a longer wheelbase too, but it is shorter than the BMW X1 in terms of length and wheelbase. Lay your eyes on the XC40, and a shrunken XC60 it is not. The signature front grille with the mas-

sive 'iron logo' in the centre, is smaller with horizontal slats and so are the headlamps with Thor's hammer LED DRLs. Being an R-Design, there aren't any chrome bits, instead, everything is blacked-out in line to look sporty. Body cladding is more pronounced, and the 18-inch wheels wrapped in 235/55 Pirelli rubber are just stunning. There's also an option of 20-inch wheels. The upward sloping window line at the rear is distinctive. The rear tail-lamps are unmistakably Volvo and the dual chrome mufflers round up an exciting package.

TECH BYTES

Compact Modular Architecture (CMA) is a global mid-size unibody automobile platform. The platform will also accommodate a plug-in hybrid configuration capable of 180 bhp, supplemented by a 74 bhp electric motor.



The car is available in only one top-spec R-Design trim, which gets radar-based safety features like blind spot assist, lane keeping assist, autonomous braking, and adaptive cruise control. Like the more expensive S90 sedan, this SUV gets the familiar 2.0-litre, four-cylinder diesel engine in the D4 state of tune (190hp, 400Nm), mated to an eight-speed transmission. All-wheel drive is standard.

It's a car you'd walk into

The dash design has a 'wow' effect. There are some really nice and familiar bits inside, like the steering wheel, digital instrument cluster and the 9.0-inch vertical touchscreen, shared with more expensive Volvos. Then, there are the vertical air vents highlighted in chrome, and, along with the silver trims on the dashboard and doors, it all appears rather tastefully done. Certain knobs like those for the volume control and cigarette lighter are superbly crafted. Carrying forward its youthful character inside is the 'Lava' orange felt lining in the bot-



tom half of the interiors. Some plastics lower down in the cabin, however, are hard, and, in some places, feel like they're from a class below. The seats are draped in a mix of leather and Alcantara with contrasting white stitching. These are electrically adjustable, with the driver's side getting a memory function too. They're a bit hard but supportive, and offer plenty of adjustments, including that to extend the under-thigh support (manually).

SPECIFICATIONS

PRICE: ₹45 lakh (estimated, Ex-showroom - Delhi)

ENGINE: Diesel AT

TYPE: 4 cyls, turbo-diesel

CUBIC CAPACITY: 1969cc

VALVE TRAIN: 4 valves per cylinder, DOHC

MAX POWER: 190hp at 4000rpm

At the back, it's decently spacious in terms of legroom and headroom, but you sit slightly knees-up. Also, the seat itself isn't wide and best suitable for two passengers.

What's nice is that the cabin is very practical with several storage bits like huge door pockets, thanks to the absence of door speakers. There's a good amount of space ahead of the gear console, including a slot to charge your mobile phone wirelessly. The armrest console is large and there's also a cleverly-designed removable dustbin in there with a spring-loaded lid, and you get a hidden storage area under the driver's seat. The boot is huge at 460 litres and there's an added storage compartment.

This car gets a host of features, including radar-based safety tech like lane-keeping assist, blind spot warning, adaptive cruise control, pilot assist, emergency

outputs that are like BMW's X1. Power delivery is quick and the delay before the turbo spools up is minimal. The engine feels energetic, and because of its strong mid-range performance, it builds speeds briskly. This motor spins freely until 4,200rpm and begins to feel strained thereafter. Claimed acceleration timing of 7.9sec is in the same ballpark as its rivals. Refinement at idle and cruising speeds is great, although at higher revs the diesel rattle does filters through. What makes the drive experience silky smooth is the eight-speed automatic gearbox that shifts ratios seamlessly.

While its bigger SUV siblings (XC90 and XC60) get air springs, the XC40 gets standard steel springs and neither are its dampers adjustable. Still, it rides in a composed manner, and although there's a hint of firmness at low speeds, at no point does it crash or get uncomfortable over bad

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Feature-rich machine The Volvo XC40

braking and then some. Other safety kits like ESP, traction control, hill descent control and multiple airbags are included as well. Then there's the clever kit like auto park-in and park-out, which helps steer the vehicle in and out of a parking. The 9-inch touchscreen controls all the functions of the car and features Android Auto and Apple CarPlay. The audio experience is enhanced by Harman Kardon. There's a clear virtual instrument cluster that displays maps so that the driver doesn't need to look away to the left. Features like an electric tailgate, driving modes, auto LED headlamps, panoramic sunroof, four heated seats, dual zone climate control, front and rear parking sensors, reversing camera, are all standard on the XC40 R-Design.

Ride composed

The XC40 is powered by a 2.0-litre, four-cylinder diesel engine that makes 190hp and 400Nm -

roads despite the 18-inch wheels. The 235/55 tyres do well to flatten small road imperfections, but the larger ones do filter through. The brakes are sharp and there's a function on the infotainment screen to make the pedal feel a bit crisper, which is particularly useful when driving fast.

With prices expected to be between ₹43-45 lakh, the R-Design sits in the company of the fully loaded variants of its core rivals but boasts the longest equipment and radar-based safety feature list. Its engine is refined, smooth, making the XC40 nice and energetic to drive.

Yes, it does have some flaws like rear-seat comfort, which is poor. However, look beyond that and this Volvo is the most youthful and freshest model in its segment.

So, if are in the market for a car like this, the XC40 is a car you should have high up on your shortlist.