



Volvo XC40

35-40 lakh
(ex-road, estimated)

WE SAY: HAS POTENTIAL TO CONQUER THE COMPACT LUXURY CROSSOVER MARKET

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There are two ways of looking at the XC40—one too many—which is essentially identical, or as Volvo's strategy to compete, carve to a market, creating new niches, filling existing ones and such. To leave you in no doubt, the



Speakers mounted from door handle, check up interior handles

XC40 is Volvo's answer to Audi's Q3, Mercedes' GLA and BMW's X1. Unlike the three Germans, the XC40, thankfully, does not have the Russian Doll design ideology where it looks like a shrunken XC60. It's refreshingly different and has its own persona. Volvo is at least six months away from releasing it in India.

But they are pretty sure that once they are here, all customers will have to choose are the colours and alloy wheel designs. And that's been Volvo's MO in India. They don't skip on safety and luxury features and they don't play the low-starting-price-low-standards-features game.

There's a 2.0-litre turbo-petrol making 244hp and 350Nm and a 2.0-litre diesel making 187hp and 400Nm. There's also a front-wheel-drive lower-powered diesel lurking in the wings. India may, or may not get that. Once you are inside, it's very easy to adjust the seats and steering and get a spot-on-driving position. The controls and switches need no FTD to get you accustomed. And the thing controls rather well. For a tall use, the XC40 has hardly discernible roll around corners. I know of sedans and hatchbacks that have more roll than this Volvo. It doesn't dart about like a Mini, obviously. But the

XC40 has a true steering, predictable handling and flat cornering habits. Plus, there are the driving modes that are simple to engage and offer that last bit of customisation to your driving mood. I preferred keeping it in Dynamic for that extra bit of weight in the steering.

I drove it in and around Barcelona, where the roads don't give the suspension the workout an Indian road can. So, I can't comment much on the ride. But I can safely bet there will be nothing that's going to throw your spine out of order. The petrol is lighter, quieter and revvier. But it's no Polo. Besides, even in Dynamic mode, the gearbox doesn't let the engine rev too high. The diesel is just as quiet. And if you have to stomp, seems slightly heavier on turn in than the petrol. But that's barely something you'd notice. For the kind of car the XC40 is, the diesel seems rather apt. It's noisy from the outside. But from the inside, it's as silent, and offers the same quick, up and go tendencies as the petrol besides offering a refined, serene cruise when you want.

Like most other compact-luxury crossovers, the XC40 is a four-and-a-half-seater. The boot offers a lot of versatility in the form of hooks and underground



compartments rather than just a huge load of space. The door pockets are large thanks to Volvo eliminating the audio speakers from doors there and moving them closer to the dash. The quality of materials is exquisite and the K Design trim offers a nice splatter of orange to the trim. The instrument console is an all-digital affair and offers great visibility in all lighting conditions. But, it's not all perfect inside.

It seems Volvo, a company that has been at the forefront of safety, is pretty convinced that it's okay to take your eyes off the road to access routine things through the touchscreen. So, like the rest from its latest range, Volvo has adorned the XC40 with a massive touchscreen. And again, even routine,



OR TRY THIS



Audi Q3

Not spectacular at anything but not terribly bad either. Has right mix of looks, size, and performance.

everyday controls, things you'd access frequently, like the climate control, are all accessible only through the touchscreen. I have said it before and am saying it again. Volvo activated controls are a tad complicated and touch controls are outright dangerous. Taking eyes off the road to align your finger to the screen is not a safer alternative to knobs, dials and buttons you can operate through muscle memory. Competitively, BMW's iDrive and Audi's MMI systems are safer because they will have a physical, circular dial that's at the centre of interaction of their interface. Volvo needs to stop getting all touch. And stop it now. That and some wind noise at higher speeds apart, XC40 is a cracker of a package.

The compact, or rather, ultra-compact crossover is here to stay and is going to be the sale of a manufacturer's brand that will get the most boost. In India, though, the Q3—more than the driver-oriented GLA or the bit larger X1—has got the luxury compact crossover spot on. It doesn't excel at one thing, but is fairly good at everything. It's the kind of quality that sells. And the XC40 can seriously challenge the Audi. It makes the right impressions with the looks. While

Drives

UP CLOSE



All touch looks neat, but needs to be kept sitting away off the road to operate



8-speed torque converter, 480hp and 600Nm. Perfect for 500 cc



This is pure four-seater or half-seater. Or a four-seater-come-three-seater

the Audi and BMW look like shrunken versions of their bigger brothers. The XC40 is distinct, useful, whole and bold with its design. It retains the Volvo signature family resemblance but is much more imaginative than a shrunken XC60 in terms of design. Moreover, it seems a lot more engaging and interesting to drive than the Audi Q3. Priced right and with Volvo's penchant to fully equip their cars, the XC40 could become the new segment benchmark. **B**

Specification

350cc, 4-cyl turbo (petrol and diesel), 244hp at 5400rpm (petrol), 187hp at 4200rpm (diesel), 350Nm at 1800-4000rpm (petrol), 400Nm at 1700-2500rpm (diesel), 5A, AWD

34 seats

1780mm (diesel), ground clearance: 210mm

187hp (petrol), 173hp (diesel)

SAFETY: Performance has been all-round compact luxury crossover. All Volvo models will do to get it here and price is right.

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