

SENSE IN SIMPLICITY

There's a new powertrain in the Volvo XC40, the T4 petrol, in just one luxurious yet sporty trim level, the R-Design. We've been to Goa to drive the new compact luxury SUV

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QUOTE BY HENRY DAVID THOREAU resonates in my head as I get into the new Volvo XC40 and absorb its posh new yet familiar cabin: "Life is frittered away by detail. Simplify. Simplify." The beauty of simplicity is like concealed plumbing. There can be a whole lot going on underneath a simple exterior which everyone may or may not like to see. However, Volvo play a different angle. If one wants a compact luxury SUV from Volvo, this is it.

From the outset, the XC40 felt second nature. Get in, adjust the powered seat. Belt up. Hands fall right in place. Left hand touches the Start button. Right reaches window controls. All is well. Getting out of the hotel, I felt myself fit into the XC40 like hand in glove. The proportions are instantly easy to grasp and the steering wheel weighs up nicely. Since we've driven the XC40 before — the D4 AWD diesel thrice and the T5 AWD once — the features were familiar too. The R-Design may be a sporty trim, but it's just as luxurious as its larger siblings and a mile ahead of the competition in terms of equipment. But we'll get to that later. >



(Above) Large touchscreen, good connectivity options, and wireless charging

(Left) Impeccable materials and quality of finish

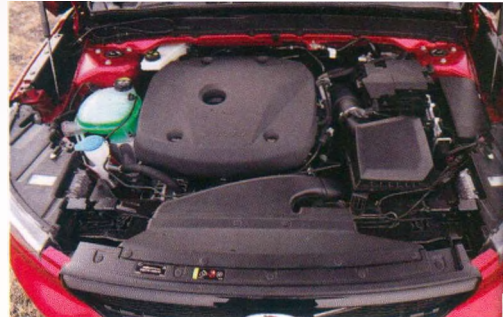


The new XC40 T4 looks just like its diesel twin, the D4 — that's on its way out — but there are subtle differences at the rear. For one, there's "T4" badging and, next to it, just the "R-Design" silver badge. There's no black badge saying "AWD" because, you guessed it, this one isn't all-wheel drive. Right. The exterior elements to note are the Thor's hammer-styled full-LED active bending headlights, the sporty R-Design front grille and 18-inch alloy wheels, and the dual-tone paint finish with a black contrast top and the big sunroof look stunning, especially under the warm Goa sun.

The interior, just as before, bears top-notch finish and immaculate attention to detail. Every element is well-finished, far beyond its Rs-39.90-lakh price tag, to be honest, and the stitching, material quality, and overall fit-and-finish are impeccable, with no sharp or rough edges. Highlights in here are the large tablet interface, the premium sound system, and climate

control that also packs air filtration for the cabin. The seats are ergonomic masterpieces and very supportive. The XC90's run-off-road protection is inherited here, too. Visibility is excellent and, in either case, there are a slew of assistance systems that have everything in check. The rear seats offer good space and storage and have their own share of comfort features. The boot is large and the tail-gate is powered and also opens if one shakes a leg.

IntelliSafe, the suite of advanced safety systems, including City Safety, Adaptive Cruise Control (ACC), Pilot Assist, and Road Sign Recognition, is standard kit, mounted in the upper realm of the windscreen. Driving from Cansulim to Cabo de Rama and beyond, I tried them all — on narrow two-lane hill roads as well as the four-lane new road to Canacona and beyond. The Pilot Assist works flawlessly so long as there are white lane-markings on the road. Even on the two-laner, it works, but pulls to the right assuming it's a one-way. I switched to ACC there and that worked just fine. In fact, with the multi-level distance choices, the ACC, with distance set to two



(Above right) Engine has enough grunt for all-day cruising

(Left) Contrast top and sunroof look neat

VOLVO **XC40** T4 R-DESIGN

Price: Rs 39.90 lakh (ex-showroom)

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

Max Power: 190 hp @ 4,700 rpm

Max Torque: 300 Nm @ 1,400-4,000 rpm

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

Suspension: MacPherson strut front, four-link rear

Weight: 1,598 kg



bars, keeps about four car-lengths on a straight road, but, while going down steep descents, it increases that distance by about 50 per cent and brakes earlier than when it's in a straight line. Moreover, this system works even after dark. It detected cyclists, pedestrians, even small cattle and dogs; a major improvement to the system in the S60 I'd driven in Pune back in 2011. The XC40 offers proper level-three autonomy. The addition of active bending headlights with cornering assist from the fog-lamps, when below 30 km/h or when tackling sharp bends, makes for maximum visibility in the darkest of locations.

Now, the engine. It's a Drive-E unit, a 2.0-litre four-cylinder turbo-petrol with 190 hp and 300 Nm — more than enough for all needs, as we would find out. An eight-speed automatic drives the front wheels and it's quite brisk once it gets going. It can hold triple-digit highway speeds with ease. However, it's not the most urgent of combinations but it copes well with traffic, overtaking, and changes in elevation. It also gets a little aural as the revs pile, but it's not a bother. What is undeniable is its reassuring and planted feel, as well as the excellent ride quality and effortless braking. Four

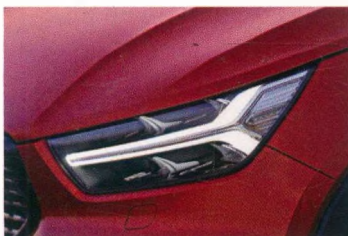


(Left) Boot offers flexible load options; gesture-opening powered tailgate; ski-through access useful



(Above) R-Design gets sharp 18-inch wheels

(Below) Automatic full-LED headlamps; active bending function gives impressive spread



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(Below) Tail-light cluster is signature Volvo



drive modes — Eco, Comfort, Dynamic, and Off-road — allow for further specialization. The XC40 T4 feels sure-footed across all sorts of terrain: from paved roads to dirt paths and rocky surfaces; the sort we encountered on our way to the edge of the cliff overlooking the sea. Its high 211-mm ground clearance, multi-link suspension and good cabin sound insulation make for effortless driving over all surfaces. In tight spots, the park assist and camera make short work of manoeuvring out.

All said and done, the Volvo XC40 takes to urban situations like a duck to water and, like some other migratory duck, doesn't flinch when shown a cross-country route. It takes all conditions in its stride and is backed by truly unmatched safety features and equipment not just in its segment, but in what is probably the entire global automotive sector. There are rivals in terms of size, but, given the price and equipment level, they pale in comparison. Of course, if you want a driver's car that's sharp and agile, it may face some competition from Bavaria. But, for a complete feeling car with advanced equipment and unmatched safety tech, well, there's more to life than a Volvo; precisely why one would choose the sensible Swede. **car**

