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Volvo XC40 – Road Test

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Keith Ward assesses Volvo's award-winning XC40

OFF to a flying start is Volvo's new XC40 compact SUV - already named European Car of the Year among its crop of early goings and with UK sales quickly racking up to 2,000 a month, making it the company's most successful new model launch ever on these shores.

While there is an immediately striking family resemblance to the already established seven-seater XC90 (length 4,950 mm or 16.24 ft) and mid-sized XC60 (4,688 mm or 15.38 ft), the "baby" XC40 at 4,425 mm or 14.52 ft slots comfortably below them without, on first impressions, seriously cramping its five occupants, or stinting on cargo space.

Familiar external design features are the boomerang-shaped rear lights, LED headlights with T-shaped daytime running lights and under-bumper skid plates front and rear.



But the XC40 actually sits on a completely new platform as the first of a new generation of 40-series models to come - and it has its own features, such as the sculpted lower door sections and the availability of contrast coloured roofs.

Volvo drivers of old might be startled by the youth-chasing choice of five colours of seat upholstery in the newcomer. The special First Edition upper range version of the XC40 we drove was carpeted in vivid so-called Lava Orange with matching door panel inserts.

(An image of dad-dancing at family weddings springs to mind.)

Here's another sign of new-age Volvo, still Swedish-based but now Chinese-owned, of course: In an industry first, they have teamed up with Amazon Prime to offer test drives in cars delivered to your home or workplace (surely not in cardboard boxes?).

Prime Now test drives are available for a limited time and only on Volvo's V40 model, and open to Amazon customers in four UK cities during June and July.

Back to the XC40: There are appealing practical features. The wide boot with no luggage lip makes for easy loading, while push-button lowering of the rear seats extends that flat floor to a tad under five feet (1,500 mm) according to our tape. The parcel shelf when removed can be stored below deck.



Moving audio speakers from the front doors to the dash has cleared extra-large door pockets to take laptop, tablet and water bottle, say Volvo. Automatic versions of the XC40 create space for an integrated waste bin in the centre console.

A huge 46-strong XC40 range offers a choice of seven trim levels, two diesel (150 and 190 hp) and three petrol engines (156, 190 and 247 hp) with CO2 values 127 to 166. Prices rise from just under £28,000 to over £40,000.

Standard are Europe-wide navigation, dual zone climate, cruise control, a nine-inch centre console touch screen, a 12.3-inch info display, voice activation, drive mode selection and the expected Volvo crop of safety features.



Our test car, one of an initial allocation with extra-special First Edition trim, and priced at just under £40,000, was lavishly hung with such goodies as self-parking, a 360-degree surround-view camera, Pilot Assist semi-autonomous drive technology with automatic emergency braking, a 13-speaker, 600-watt sound system and full smartphone integration.

Volvo recently announced that their next major model, a new S60 saloon, will be the first Volvo to be produced without choice of a diesel engine, such is their declared commitment to petrol hybrids or full electrification from 2019 onwards.

That brings a tinge of regret (sorry, Greens) at the phasing out of this 2.0 litre, 190 hp D4 diesel. With maximum torque kicking in from 1,750 rpm and spirited enough when called upon to reach 60 mph in 7.5 seconds it makes for relaxed, all-mood driving, mated



comfortably as it is to an eight-speed automatic box and 4WD. Even with these potentially fuel-thirsty features, it managed a tad over 40 mpg in a week's unsparing motoring.

On the road, the XC40 suspension soaks up bumps and potholes but there was some body lean on quick corners and road rumble from the big tyres - 245/45 Pirellis on 20-inch alloys.

Other minor grumbles: In a generally pleasant cabin, the driver's rearward view through a shallow rear screen is restricted thanks to a side window line that kicks up towards the rear and the intrusion of plump headrests perched on the back seats. I was thankful to be able to lower them most of the time. Also, scrolling through the multi-layered touch screen just to adjust the cabin temperature, for example, proved a bit of a bind.

VERDICT

All-round, it is not difficult to see why the XC40 is off to an XC-eedingly good start.



Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

Volvo XC40 D4 AWD First Edition Compact Premium SUV; five door; five seat.

Dimensions: Length 4,425 mm (14.52 ft); width 1,863 mm (6.11 ft); height 1,655 mm (5.43 ft). Boot Length 890 to 1,500 mm (2.92 to 4.92 ft); width 1,000 mm (3.28 ft); vol 479 to 1,336 litres (16.92 to 47.18 cu.ft).

Engine: Diesel; 1,969 cc; four cylinder; 4WD; eight speed automatic.

Power 190 hp @ 4,000 rpm; max torque 400 Nm (295 lb.ft) @ 1,750-2,500 rpm.



Pace 130 mph; 0-60 mph in 7.5 secs.

MPG: On test 40.1; Official Combined 56.5; tank 54 litres (11.88 Imperial gallons).

CO2 133 g/km; VED £515 then £140; BIK 28-29%; Euro VI emissions.

Weights: Kerb 1,698 kg (3,743 lb); max tow braked 2,100 kg (4,630 lb); unbraked 750 kg (1,653 lb).

Tyres: 245/45 Pirelli on 20-inch alloys.

Warranty: 36 months or 60,000 miles including breakdown; 36 months paint; 12 years anti-rust.

Price: £39,905 as tested.

Rivals: Audi Q3; BMW X1; VW Tiguan.