

Review: Volvo XC40 Twin Motor Recharge



By [Lindsey Schutters](#)

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As you read this, someone is messing with my podcast queue and my YouTube Music listening preferences. It's my own fault because I didn't reset the infotainment system on the Volvo XC40 P8 AWD Recharge Pro before it was collected. And cars of the future are, basically, rolling smartphones.



Source: Lindsey Schutters

When Volvo announced it was rethinking infotainment in its then upcoming full-electric variant of its XC40 compact SUV, it was the catalyst to a revolution of sorts.

The car now known as the XC40 Twin Motor Recharge (the official listing name changed during the review period) comes loaded with Google's Android Automotive operating system (now known as Google Automotive Services) and wants to connect directly to the internet.

In the South African context this means you'll need to hotspot to your phone or get one of those portable WiFi dongles because our network operators are a little slow to the [smart watches](#) also join the jol.



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While you can just run Android Auto or Apple CarPlay on the main in-car display, you lose all the cool navigation (via Google Maps) routing features on the instrument cluster behind the steering wheel.

Cars are phones now

After you connect the car to the internet, load your Google account details and download your apps from the Play Store, you can then use all the smart features of the car. A handy one is the integration with Google Maps that will automatically suggest the nearest EV charging station.

Thankfully the Rubicon Group e-mobility division and the GridCars network have clearly marked charging point locations. Finding a vacant spot at a charger or a fast charger is the only challenge, then.



Owning an EV at this stage in the product segment development is a bit like owning a smartphone in the early days of pocket computers. You charged overnight and made sure you were near an outlet if you need to charge during the day.

Topping off the battery from a wall plug in the garage at night proved far more reliable a charging solution than seeking out a dedicated EV charger and spending about two hours at its location – there is only so much shopping you can do at a Checkers.

Running costs



A Sunday drive with the family to Franschhoek was an excellent test for all the car systems, mostly because there is a section through Villiersdorp where there is no cell signal coverage and that brought the in-car entertainment to a swift halt.

Covering 157km on a round trip with a mix of highway and country roads used 49% of the battery, with 150km indicated on the remaining range – it fluctuates according to driving style and ambient temperature.

Charging overnight was affected by loadshedding, but 30kWh was replaced in about six hours and the full eight hours plugged in replenished the batteries to 85%.

A quick calculation it to around R50 in electricity still working on our three phase Eskom home supply in the first tariff block. Extrapolate that out to a full month and into the second tariff block (>600kWh) and owning an EV for our monthly commute distance will add 720kWh to our use and about R1,800 to the monthly bill.

Now subtract oil and coolant consumables from the service cost - and there's also fewer brake pad replacements because EV drivers should always select the one pedal drive option (where the car goes into energy recovery when you lift off the power) - and the savings really begin to add up.

Mindset change

An EV isn't a perfect solution for those who can afford it, with the question of longer road trips never leaving a suitable answer because any drive over 250km is going to require significant downtime for recharging.

But the Volvo solution is well suited for standard urban commutes and even daytrips within 120km of home. If you treat it like a phone or a laptop and top it up whenever you have a chance at home or when you do some shopping, it can easily be your primary transport.



The company takes this idea of car ownership a step further with added customer benefits like a holiday courtesy vehicle that allows EV owners to use an equivalent petrol car for up to two weeks in a three year cycle.

Also included in the R1,260,000 price is three years of comprehensive insurance – the insurance options for EVs in SA is limited right now – as well as an 5 year/100,000km warranty and full maintenance plan with 5 years of roadside assistance for unlimited mileage.

EVs aren't quite ready for the realities of load shedding and the distance South Africans are willing to drive for a weekend getaway, but Volvo were on the right track with its first full electric.



The newer C40 (coupe version of the XC40) builds on this platform and the forthcoming EX30 will introduce a new 800V (Volvo's current EVs are 400V) architecture that will allow for rapid charging from >300kW DC chargers – think 80% charge in 10min.

Ever increasing range and shrinking recharge time is bringing EVs on par with ICE cars for ownership experience, but right now these cars are still more like smartphones.



ABOUT LINDSEY SCHUTTERS

Lindsey is the editor for ICT, Construction&Engineering and Energy&Mining at Bizcommunity

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