

HEAD-TO-HEAD: COMPACT SUV TEST

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Est. 1895 | autocar.co.uk | 17 April 2019



THE NEW RANGE ROVER EVOQUE

Why the second-generation model tops the pack



ON THE ROAD



"Capable, rugged and versatile"

BEHIND THE WHEEL



"Rich, comfortable and enveloping"

OUR OVERALL VERDICT: REFINED, SPACIOUS AND IMPRESSIVE TO DRIVE

Warning: the comparison test you're about to read involves a Land Rover. It therefore includes obligatory photographs taken off-road, in a Welsh limestone quarry known well to staffers of this magazine, for which the Autocar road test desk and photography department send their apologies. In this line of work, some visual clichés are simply too well-worn to resist. This particular cliché should certainly be acknowledged for what it is, though: a bit of artistic licence. Because while the second-generation

Range Rover Evoque may be all-new and all-important for its creator, it's every inch a compact SUV and not an 'off-roader'. As such cars go, the Evoque is capable, rugged and versatile, but it's very much an everyday road car. You know this. We know this. Yet while picturing it abandoned on double yellows, astride the kerb and hazards ablaze outside a primary school might have been more appropriate, such a photograph wouldn't have looked half as pretty or been as much fun in the making.

Our story so far on the new Evoque has brought us through early ride-along and international press launch

and, very recently, UK first drive. Now, though, a chance to find out just how good this rather important Evoque is judged against its toughest opponents, two of which we are about to describe and rate in specific reference to: the second-generation Audi Q3, which – roll up, roll up – is also new this year, and the Volvo XC40, which is Autocar's incumbent compact SUV class favourite and without which these proceedings would otherwise be largely irrelevant.

But, well, yes, you're right: as it happens, there are four cars in the photograph you've been glancing →



MODERN FAMILY

Glossy, style-led compact SUVs remain very much on-trend since the Evoque kick-started demand. Now in its second generation, can Range Rover's high-rise fashion icon retain its crown? Matt Saunders pits it against its rivals – and an oddball interloper – to find out

PHOTOGRAPHY OLGUN KORDAL



“ Compact SUVs are increasingly popular for good reasons ”

park; and, perhaps most importantly, that has been made so temptingly affordable by the modern finance methods on which the car business is so squarely built in 2019?

In the absence of other motivating factors, they clearly wouldn't. That's how a company such as Land Rover can become an increasingly well-established global car industry player – and the Evoque can outsell the Ford Mondeo across Europe for two years out of the past five, with every chance now of accelerating away from the old-guarder for good.

This Evoque is pretty much the same size as the original version but for a few millimetres here and there. Opinions differ on exactly how new the 'PTA' model platform under the car really is, but it's new enough to have accommodated a longer wheelbase and better on-board practicality, as well as mixed-metal construction and a whole family of 48V mild-hybrid powertrains. Sounds pretty new to me.

The resulting car, in likely big-selling 2.0-litre, 178bhp diesel 'D180 AWD' form, remains a good 150kg heavier than the average weight of the rest of the cars in this test and is taller and less aerodynamic than most. And yet that mild-hybrid tech and nine-speed automatic gearbox allows it to get within 10% of matching the real-world cruising fuel economy of the most economical car here – which is the Audi, incidentally, which returns a typical 46mpg on a mix of UK motorway and A-road.

Both the Q3 40 TDI quattro S tronic and XC40 D4 AWD automatic match the Land Rover for driven wheels and transmission spec, and both beat the Brit for peak power. But neither offers quite the same mild-hybrid technology, and neither has quite as much torque. Torque is important in cars like this, as I'm sure you won't need telling – but we'll come back to that.

In order to keep the price points close, we elected to test the Evoque in lower-mid-range S-badged trim, knowing that, being a Range Rover, it's a car that gets a bit prohibitively expensive in the dressier upper trim levels. As tested, however, you may be surprised to find out how competitively priced the car is – even versus an Audi Q3 in entry-level Sport trim and an upper-mid-level Volvo XC40 (we've broken down the important figures on p47).

And even in relatively humble form, the Evoque's cabin is a cut above those of its opponents. I'll be honest: I didn't expect that. When I drove one in Greece six weeks ago, the car's slightly variable material quality seemed to me to be one of its potential vulnerabilities. But, as it turns out, neither a Q3 nor an XC40 feels nearly as rich, comfortable nor enveloping from within.

You sit higher in the Evoque than in the Q3, at a similar height as in the XC40 but in a more comfortable, more laid-back and better-supported driving position. The Volvo gives you a less well-padded seat to perch on →



The Evoque has by far the best-resolved ride

← at for the past minute or so. For reasons of general usefulness, fairness and accuracy, however, what you're about to read will actually be a slightly truncated three-car comparison with an addendum on an interesting if unconventional new Lexus – the UX 250h – which, as it turns out, isn't really a compact SUV at all. It might, though, provide welcome cause to wonder whether you need such a car quite as much as you thought you did.

Modern compact SUVs remain suspiciously on-trend. Unlike some of my colleagues, I don't have a problem with this. To me, they are increasingly popular for good reasons and are being bought by

people who, had they been in the market 25 years ago, would have likely ended up in a biggish, volume-branded family saloon or estate mostly out of a lack of choice.

We all get to that stage in our lives when a five-door hatchback simply isn't enough car for us any more. The modern buyer who has reached that point can still buy a biggish, volume-branded family saloon or estate, of course. But why would they when they can have something that looks more stylish and 'aspirational' on the driveway; that has greater convenience, versatility and comfort about it; that's smaller, and feels safer, than a biggish saloon and is easier to get into and see out of and



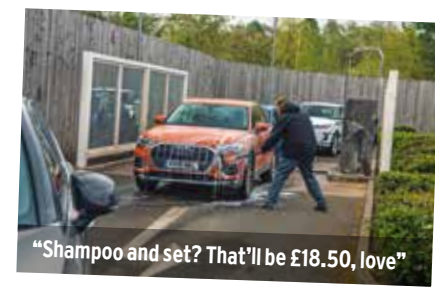
Evoque driver sits high in the most opulent cabin here



Q3's distinct cabin style trails the Evoque on perceived quality



“The XC40 is lighter, keener and more agile in sharper corners”



“Shampoo and set? That’ll be £18.50, love”

← Volvo have stronger turns of pace on the road than the Range Rover, and they do have a slight advantage – but not a telling one. True, the Evoque’s weight counts against it a little when you want every bit of speed that its diesel engine can offer. But on part throttle and at middling revs, answering the kind of demands typically made of cars like this in daily motoring, you wouldn’t say it feels any slower than its opponents. The car has got plenty of torque, and working with it, its nine-speed gearbox has good instincts for just the right ratio to make useful, assertive, unstrained progress. Neither the Audi nor the Volvo feels quite as slick, drivable or cleverly tuned in give-and-take motoring.

The XC40 is slightly lighter, keener and more agile than the Evoque in how it tackles sharper corners. Its ride is noisier, though, and its vertical body control is less progressive and sophisticated than the Evoque’s, making a fuss over choppy surfaces that the Land Rover’s suspension simply smother. The Q3 is a touch crisper and keener-handling than the Evoque, too, and it has the assured outright grip levels and lateral body control you expect of an Audi. It has a less settled, less absorbent ride than the Land Rover, though, and it steers with a sense of filtered, distant aloofness and little reassuring weight or feel, so it’s harder to place and less satisfying and fluent as a result.

All of which made it pretty plain to this tester what the winner of this group test ought to be. The new Range Rover Evoque has felt like a car more worthy of the brand on its bonnet than its predecessor at every turn as we’ve got to know it these past few months. By dominating its closest rivals on comfort, refinement, spaciousness, interior richness and driveability, and with its supple, assured good handling, it feels like it has now come of age pretty emphatically. So much so, in fact, that I’d say it could be one of the most luxurious £40,000 cars available in any part of the new car market. I could probably make a convincing →



Torque advantage offsets Evoque’s marginal weight-induced agility deficit

“The Q3 has the grip and body control you expect of an Audi”

← and makes you adopt a more upright, bent-legged driving position with a less well-placed or adjustable steering wheel. The Audi offers better seat comfort but a lower hip point, so if you do want the more convenient raised vantage point that an SUV typically affords (and I’d say most buyers probably do), you have to fashion one yourself by ratcheting the seat cushion height upwards – which, in turn, makes you run a bit short of leg room. The Evoque gets the primary control ergonomics spot on, no fiddling required. It has a higher-rising bonnet and front bulkhead that its rivals, and that’s one of the reasons why it feels bigger on the road. In this case, though, bigger-feeling and more comfortable definitely go hand in hand.

On materials quality and luxury ambience I expected both Audi and Volvo to give Land Rover a real test, but neither actually does. The Q3’s cabin looks and feels bolder, more sculptural and more overtly stylized than those of its peers, but the effect is a bit contrived. And the car’s underlying standard on perceived quality is absolutely no better than that of the Evoque.

The XC40’s cabin, meanwhile, still looks fresh, youthful and appealing a year or so after launch, just like the rest of the car. But it doesn’t quite have the ambient richness of the Evoque’s interior nor the sense of reductive modern style. Neither can

either the Volvo or the Audi quite match the Land Rover for practicality as a comfortable, convenient, adult-sized four-seater – although the Audi beats the Land Rover for boot space, we should note.

What about driving experiences, then? Well, we could, at this point, spend paragraphs telling you which of these cars is the best-handling – but there are more important factors to address first. Factors like comfort, refinement, cabin isolation, driveability, body control and ease of use, all of which are at the heart of an SUV’s dynamic mission statement, and for all of which – against the odds in some cases, I have to say – the Evoque leads its field.

I’ve never driven a JLR product with a four-cylinder Ingenium diesel engine that impressed me so much in a luxury car. It’s clearly taken a few years, but the signs are that Gaydon’s engineers are really getting to grips with the business of putting manners on this 2.0-litre lump, which is laudably quiet and smooth in the Evoque. It makes both the Q3 and XC40 sound noisy and a touch coarse, although I should add that neither would really bother you too much for general lack of mechanical refinement when judged in isolation.

The bald performance numbers suggest that both the Audi and →



UX’s cabin is at least as well executed and solid as the Evoque’s

The Volvo’s ‘Lava Orange’ carpeting and upholstery is certainly unusual – and, if you like it, it’s a £175 option. An old kid’s car mat, a pot of Dulux ‘Tangerine Twist’, a Stanley knife and some glue ought to be cheaper, though. We’d avoid.



Volvo driver sits high but its cabin feels less classy

PAYING MONTHLY

A class-leading residual value forecast is chief among the reasons why the Evoque looks so expensive at showroom list price while appearing much less costly on monthly finance. There are plenty of pricier trims for the car, and plenty of options to tick, but cheaper versions are available.

These PCP figures are manufacturer-sourced, so you might be able to haggle them down. Frugal private buyers should note that by keeping the car’s after-options price below £40k (which is easy enough), you’d slash your annual VED bill by more than £300 per year compared with these figures.

It’s interesting to note that for fleet drivers the Evoque remains a slightly pricier prospect than its peers, but that’s mostly due to its CO₂ emissions.

For both fleet and private buyers, however, the Volvo is made to look pricier here than it should due to the relatively high trim level of our test car.

FOR PRIVATE BUYERS

| | Evoque D180 AWD S | XC40 D4 AWD R Design Pro | Q3 40 TDI Sport | UX 250i Premium Plus |
|---|-------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| List price | £39,015 | £37,770 | £36,315 | £34,105 |
| After-options price | £41,010 | £40,770 | £40,125 | £40,025 |
| Typical PCP (3yrs/30k/£10k dep./list price w/o options) | £291 | £330 | £319 | £264 |
| Insurance group/cost VED | 30/£816 £465 | 30/£816 £465 | 30/£816 £465 | 22/£640 £455 |

FOR COMPANY CAR DRIVERS

| | | | | |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Contract hire (ex-VAT, 3yrs/30k/£1300 deposit) | £435 | £435 | £445 | £380 |
| BIK tax | 37%/£481 | 34%/£433 | 37%/£448 | 24%/£273 |

Contract hire quotes thanks to Wessexfleet.co.uk. VED and BIK figures based on NEDC equivalent CO₂ emissions for 2019-20 financial year



Evoque’s rear cabin is now roomier



Q3’s bold interior extends to the rear



UX offers only Focus-like rear space



Volvo will struggle to seat three adults



Smaller Lexus is pleasingly agile and steers nicely



Firm-feeling Q3 grips well but its ride isn't as settled

← argument for having one over a BMW 520d. It's that good.

All of which makes life pretty hard for the cheaper, smaller, hybrid-powered Lexus UX 250h that's out to steal the Evoque's lunch money. While its 'compact SUV' billing leads you to believe that it might, the new UX doesn't have the practicality, versatility, comfort or convenience to make a serious bid for success among these cars. It is, underneath the marketing smoke screen, a bigish, highish-riding hatchback with back seats and a boot no bigger than those of a Ford Focus – although it can be bought with four-wheel drive, and it does look, as one tester put it, "like an accident involving a Lamborghini Urus and a random hatchback".

And there's a reason for at least some of that: it's because the UX is only partly an Evoque rival and otherwise a replacement for the slow-selling Lexus CT hybrid hatchback, so it needs to be smaller, cheaper and more 'hatchbacky' than you might expect it to be.

So if you happen to like the 'Lamborghini-lite' styling and you're



not sure you need as much versatility and space as an Evoque gives after all, what else is there to like? Firstly, a cabin every bit as rich and even more solidly hewn than the Land Rover's and which comes with Lexus's familiar, hard-to-use infotainment system – but you may very well like it anyway. I certainly did.

It should surprise nobody that the UX is more poised and agile-handling than the rest of our field. It did surprise me that it steered quite so well, though, with fine weight, precision and a bit of feel, and also that its hybrid petrol-electric powertrain performed quite as well as it did.

Part-throttle response is getting much better from both Toyota and Lexus hybrids like this, and real-world economy remains strong when accounting for urban use as well as touring. The UX still seems a bit strained and tortured when giving that last word in acceleration, and the gearbox's manual mode remains poor –

both of which facts inevitably erode the appeal of the car's driving experience.

Would I have one as an alternative to a Range Rover Evoque? Not a chance. But as a replacement for a CT200h – or any other much plainer, less interesting, mid-range premium-branded hatch? Why not? The UX feels alternative and different – and difference should serve it well. **A**

2nd

Not quite as polished, pliant or luxurious as the Evoque, but still so fresh and appealing in so many ways – not least because it feels genuinely small

4th

More crossover hatchback than compact SUV, and lacking space and versatility in this company. An interesting alternative to a dull 'compact premium' hatch, though

3rd

Frugal, practical and with a bold, Teutonic design flavour – but disappointing mechanical refinement and not as slick to drive as it might be

Drive the

Lexus conservatively, keeping your speed below 70mph, and it'll top 55mpg easily. At a motorway cruise it's still marginally less frugal than a diesel, but it may be the only car here capable of averaging better than 40mpg overall.

1st

Gets closer to that imperious Range Rover feel than you'd believe it ever could. Refined, rich, spacious and impressive to drive

The Lexus isn't a true rival to the other three cars



| | RANGE ROVER EVOQUE D180 AWD S | VOLVO XC40 D4 AWD R-DESIGN PRO | AUDI Q3 40 TDI QUATTRO S TRONIC SPORT | LEXUS UX 250H PREMIUM PLUS |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| RATING | ★★★★★ | ★★★★☆ | ★★★★☆ | ★★★★☆ |
| Price | £39,015 | £38,235 | £36,315 | £34,105 |
| Engine | 4 cyls in line, 1999cc, diesel | 4 cyls in line, 1969cc, diesel | 4 cyls in line, 1968cc, diesel | 4 cyls in line, 1987cc, petrol, plus electric motor |
| Power | 178bhp at 4200rpm | 187bhp at 4000rpm | 187bhp at 3500-4000rpm | 181bhp (total system output) |
| Torque | 317lb ft at 1700-2500rpm | 295lb ft at 1750-3000rpm | 295lb ft at 1750-3250rpm | na |
| Gearbox | 9-spd automatic | 8-spd automatic | 7-spd dual-clutch automatic | CVT |
| Kerb weight | 1816kg | 1698kg | 1695kg | 1540-1620kg |
| 0-62mph | 9.3sec | 7.9sec | 8.0sec | 8.5sec |
| Top speed | 127mph | 130mph | 137mph | 110mph |
| Economy | 38.4-41.3mpg (WLTP combined) | 39.8-44.1mpg (WLTP combined) | 37.7-38.7mpg (WLTP combined) | 49.5-53.2mpg (WLTP combined) |
| CO₂ | WLTP figures tbc | WLTP figures tbc | WLTP figures tbc | WLTP figures tbc |

INTRODUCING THE NEW RANGE ROVER EVOQUE



landrover.co.uk

ABOVE & BEYOND



New Range Rover Evoque is as at home on city streets as it is on mountainous roads. It has all the capability credentials of a true Land Rover but with all the city smarts too, such as ClearSight Ground View* technology. This displays what's underneath the bonnet so you can keep an eye on those awkward high kerbs when parking. The Evoque really can do anything. Apart from avoid admiring glances.

Official WLTP Fuel Consumption for the Range Rover Evoque range in mpg (l/100km): Combined 28.5-44.9 (9.9-6.3). NEDCeq CO₂ Emissions 188-143 g/km. The figures provided are as a result of official manufacturer's tests in accordance with EU legislation. For comparison purposes only. Real world figures may differ. CO₂ and fuel economy figures may vary according to factors such as driving styles, environmental conditions, load and accessories.

Nolita Grey on First Edition only for 12 months from launch. *ClearSight Ground View not available on First Edition. Requires 360 camera. All in-car features should be used by drivers only when safe to do so. Drivers must ensure they