What is it like to become an EV owner



Estimated reading time: 6 minutes

The decision of what to buy

I have been interested in owning an “EV” or “Electric Vehicle” for some time but there seemed to be no good reason to change from my faithful old Volvo XC60. “Buy a Tesla” is what people kept saying to me. “It has the range, is full of gadgets, and Tesla has built its own infrastructure of Charging points across the country”.

So why turn my back on the “Model T” of the EV world? Well, I just don’t like Teslas. I want to drive a car that I can step into from my old car and feel at home in. I don’t want all the extra bells and whistles, well a few would be nice, and I have this feeling that once one goes down the Tesla route, then, like the iPhone route, you can never return from the dark side.

The first vehicle that seriously first caught my eye was the new VW id4 which I thought would make a great second car. However, after a talk, it became clear that any new electric car would be MY car and I wanted something more like my Volvo XC60. Then, Volvo finally announced the launch of a Volvo XC40 P8. The P stands for “Pure Electric” and the 8 stands for the battery size of 80kw

Therefore, immediately the UK launch was announced I put my name down and ordered a Sage Green XC40P8 and then my worries, doubts and aggravation, and a steep steep learning curve began.

Installing a home charger.

You would think that nothing could be simpler. We won’t talk even about the wait for the electrician to come, (months) but I wanted a top of the range smart one with Internet and Bluetooth access. Eventually one turned up and was installed and I downloaded the charger App onto my phone. I even managed to set it up so as to come to take advantage of my new overnight cheap rate. (did I say you need to change tariffs to an EV tariff?) Unfortunately, a week later a software update to the App meant that, I could no longer “Talk” to my charger. Luckily the program is stored in the charger, but I couldn’t update or change it. (This has now been done!)

Insurance

Then, just before picking up the car, my insurance company advises me that like on all new expensive EV’s they insist on a category S5 tracker on the car. After two phone calls, Volvo say that the car is only category 2 and will see if they can get a S5 tracker installed. By the time I eventually get a positive response from Volvo, I have already arranged for one to be fitted. However the question must be, if category S5 is required by insurance companies, why aren’t they fitted as

standard or offered at the time of sale?

Picking up the car.

So, the day came to pick up my brand-new car. I had done my homework, read all the articles, and watched plenty of YouTube Videos. However, mine was only the third of this type they had sold. The salesman had no experience driving with the model. I knew that my new car has a Google operating system built in and it should have easily connected to my own Google Account. Unfortunately, after half an hour, the car still couldn’t connect to Google. So giving up the salesman wanders away to see if anyone else can help. Fortunately, I eventually stumbled across the alternative way to connect to the car so I could finally take delivery. At this point, I checked on the charger leads provided and find out that I only got a 13A plug! A 50K car and they could not give me a proper lead to charge it!

What is it like to drive?

It is a Volvo, slightly smaller than my 10-year-old XC60 but it still feels like a Volvo, nice and safe. However, the acceleration (and two motors) will zip it from 0-60 in just 4.7 Seconds. But the one thing that takes the most getting used to is the Accelerator / Brake pedal. The Car has what is called “regenerative braking”. In other words, when I take my foot off the accelerator, it automatically brakes using the electric motors going into “charge mode” this dramatically slows the car down but at the same time recharges the battery. This new way of driving took me about a week to get used to and you end up hardly ever using the real brake.



Enjoying the Yorkshire View

Range Anxiety

I must talk about new fear that only EV owners have. Range Anxiety, or the fear of running out of charge. It is very real, and I have suffered with it as well for the first week or so. However, with a treatment of common sense, you soon realize that it is just another foolish worry that easy to overcome.

It starts with the first question everyone asks when speaking to an EV owner. “What range does it have?” WHAT is this fascination everyone has with the range? Remember, most EV owners charge up every night, at home and so leave every morning with a “Full Tank”. Therefore the question we should all ask ourselves is, “How many miles do you travel in a day?” or “How many miles do you travel before stopping on a journey?”.

When travelling you should take a 15 min break after every two hours on a M-Way. 2 hours travelling is around 120 Miles and

at at the Michaelwood Service Station 150w fast charger (for example) it would take around 20mins. In fact, most M-Way service stations now have Fast chargers. Also, Fast chargers are starting to appear all over. For example, Morrisons have put in 50 rapid chargers so far in their stores.



Charging at a Morrisons Fast Charge while shopping

The Apps, The Apps

I can’t not write a piece about EV’s without mentioning the APPS. There is now a multiplicity of APPs for different charging companies on my phone. And now, I have a new collection for when we travel to France next year. It seems that at present different charging companies all have different APPs. However, the big energy companies like Shell and BP etc are now starting to buy up the minnows. This will be both good and bad, the good is that it will bring larger investment in the charging structure and an easier system to negotiate. The bad we be the pound of flesh extracted from the EV drivers…prices for charging are already rising.

A Final Word

I have had my car now for a month, during which we have been on a touring holiday in Yorkshire. My XC40 didn’t stand out and no-one stopped and asked what it was. It is just a smaller Volvo which I fill up overnight on cheap electricity. For me, the EV is the future.

Links that might be of interest

- ***Zap Map***
- ***EV France***
- ***Volvo***