



Lexus IS Convertible

I love work

Car review | "... I can watch it for hours", you think mockingly when reading the title of this review. But those who own a Lexus IS do drive to work with great pleasure every day. The Lexus IS is among those few cars that look unassuming and business like, but in fact offer such an excellent drive that every journey is a treat. But life can be even better, because Lexus now introduces the "Lexus IS250C" and the "C" is for "convertible". Autozine tested it for you with pleasure.

The fact that the Lexus IS offers such a good drive is all thanks to its designer. Head of the development team is not a technician, but a former rally driver. His goal was to combine the thrills of a sports car with the comfort of a luxury car.

And that is not an easy task, because comfort and sportiness are opposites in many cases. When the steering is light, it doesn't provide good feedback to the driver. A soft suspension does offer lots of comfort, but makes a car tilt in corners.



Still the Lexus IS always manages to find a good compromise between each. Thanks to rear wheel drive the feeling in the steering wheel is pure; it is not affected by the front wheels that have to both power and steer the car. Because of the high equipment level and many safety features, the IS isn't exactly a feather weight, but by evenly distributing that weight over the

front and rear wheels the road handling is still above average.

In this fashion Lexus found solutions to many problems, and managed to combine the comfort of a luxury car with the sheer driving pleasure of a sports car.

Convertible

So it is only logical to increase that pleasure by creating the IS convertible. But that is even harder than just combining sportiness and comfort. The roof is an essential part of the structural integrity of a car. Compare it to this: a shoebox is pretty rigid, but without the lid this changes dramatically.



A four-seater convertible, therefore, particularly needs many extra enforcement beams. That makes the car heavier and that in turn affects the ride quality. To complicate matters even more the IS250C had to offer the same comfort level as every other IS, so Lexus opted for a metal roof. At the same time the car had to look good, both with the roof closed and open.

Because of all this the IS250C weighs a massive 160 kg more than a regular IS! But all that extra weight does pay off. The reinforcement beams also act as extra sound insulation. This makes the IS250C exceptionally quiet both with the roof open and closed. Thanks to the excellent aerodynamics the IS250 offers more comfort than most of its competitors, even without the optional wind blocker! With the roof closed this is a silent and comfortable coupe that easily measures

up to any other car in this price range.



The design has been altered so much that only the door handles, mirrors and front bumper are shared with the IS sedan. If it is up to yours truly Lexus succeeded in reaching it's goal: the IS250C looks very attractive both with the roof open and closed. The daring dark purple colour suits the test car very well! Although this is a special car without a doubt, it is also modest and your colleagues at work will certainly appreciate that. This car merely gets admiring looks, not disapproving ones.

Roadholding

Thanks to all the reinforcements the IS250C feels very rigid and that's unique for a four-seater convertible. Even better: some two-seater roadster feel less solid than this Lexus!



That is why the "overweight" cannot be noticed and the IS250C steers razor sharp. Roadholding is excellent, especially when driving at fast speeds the IS250C really comes to life. Just as easily the IS250C is the perfect car to calmly cruise along and enjoy the scenery.



Performance

Although the ride quality is still sublime, performance has been affected. The 208 PS / 252 Nm strong six-cylinder engine does have to move more weight. Because the IS250C is mainly aimed at the American market, it has been fitted with an automatic gearbox as standard. This gearbox shifts very well and can also be controlled sequentially, but it certainly does not improve efficiency. During this road test it was hardly possible to use less than 10 litres of petrol per 100 km

and that's not a good figure.

Yet, the IS250C doesn't feel slow at all and that's because the car does everything with great ease. For example, just a little touch of the accelerator is enough to quickly drive off at a traffic light. When the throttle is pressed deeper, the automatic gearbox shifts down, the power of the engine can be felt through the car and a mighty roar sounds from the double exhausts. At this point most competitors still easily outperform the IS250C, but thanks to clever "presentation" the Lexus feels quick.



Refinement

And that's what it's all about with the IS250C: this car feels superior in every aspect. Just like with other cars from Lexus, refinement and attention to detail are of the highest level. That starts with the quality of the materials and the immaculate build quality.

The seats have an excellent fit, and in the "Executive" version driven here, they offer both seat-heating and -cooling. Thanks to the curved back side of the seats, space in the rear is fair for a car like this (watch out: when electronically adjusting the front seats they will keep pushing, even when pressing against the knees of the people in the back!). The luggage space measures 420 litres and that's more than the IS sedan!



The (aluminium) roof opens and closes in 20 seconds. The process speeds up and slows down right before finishing, just because it feels better that way. The parking sensors in the rear bumper are also used to check if there's enough space behind the vehicle to open the boot. The whole process of opening and closing the roof is also visible on a little display between the speedometer and revcounter.

The combined audio, video, communication and navigation system works very well, although it does have a peculiar Lexus flaw: when speaking the sat nav doesn't reduce the volume of the radio, which means instructions will often get lost in the music. The sound quality of the (optional) Mark Levinson audio system is of exceptionally good quality and lifts the whole experience of the car to an even higher level.



Conclusion

The Lexus IS is now also available as a convertible. The IS sedan offers more driving pleasure than most other luxury cars, but this convertible makes the gap

even bigger. Lexus did an excellent job in creating the convertible because everything simply feels right about this car.

Road holding is excellent. Although performance figures have been affected on paper, in real life the car feels quick and even superior. This is all thanks to the high level of refinement: all parts from the engine via the audio system to the roof construction sound, feel and function just perfectly. Not only the ride quality, but also the "premium" feel has been enhanced with this convertible.

When I tell people what my job is, many say that I have the best job in the world. But one gets used to driving brand new cars every day and in the long run it is just work. But this Lexus IS250C is a car that even the most spoiled drivers will enjoy fully. The test drive with the Lexus IS250C was both an honour and a privilege: I love work! (Ivo Kroone). ■



Specifications

Lexus IS Convertible IS250C SE-L

Size and weight



Length x width x height	464 x 180 x 142 cm
Wheelbase	273 cm
Kerb weight	1.730 kg
Trailer	560 kg
Trailer - braked	1.500 kg
Fuel capacity	65 l
Luggage space	136/420 l
Tyre size	225/40R18

Engine and performance



Capacity	2500 cc
Cylinders / valves	6/4
Max power	208 PS @ 6400 rpm
Max torque	252 Nm @ 4800 rpm
Drive	rear wheels
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	9 secs
Top speed	210 km/h
Average mileage	9.3 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	13.1 l / 100 km
Mileage extra urban	7.9 l / 100 km
CO2 emissions	219 gr / km

Price

Price	Â£ 39,350
Price base model	Â£ 34,550