



Lexus RC F

F is for fun

Review | Every Lexus has a hybrid engine. Therefore, every Lexus offers a smart combination of luxury and rational thinking. But... once in a while this Japanese brand makes an exception. In the past, Lexus offered a fast sedan named "IS F" and even a super sports car named "LFA". Now the make branches off again: the "RC F" is a sports coupé which, as Lexus promises, puts a smile on the face of every driver.

Every Lexus has a hybrid engine, as does the new RC. This new coupé is set to compete with the BMW 4-Series, Audi A4 and Mercedes-Benz C-Class Coupe. The biggest difference is that the RC offers more peace and quiet while being as frugal as a tiny city car, all thanks to hybrid drive.

But... there's an extra spicy version of the RC. With this hoodlum amongst Lexus it's all about driving pleasure, and for once all idealism has been forgotten. Instead of the green hybrid drive, the RC F is powered by a less than modest 5.0-litre eight-cylinder engine that will devourer both roads and fuel.



On top of that, so many parts have been changed, that chief engineer Akio Iwasaki says it's a completely different car from the regular RC. For example, the bodywork has been changed to make room for the bigger wheels. To radically lower the car, different suspension was required. This in turn required a new steering rack, and so on.

Looks

To show in no unclear terms that the RC F is more

exciting than a regular Lexus RC, this top spec version has four exhausts. Several body panels (roof, bonnet) can be executed in a carbon look. The test car looks relatively modest but it does feature the Supersonic Silver colour, which is only available on the RC F (the regular RC is available in a somewhat lighter shade of grey).



Just like every other new Lexus model, the RC F is fitted with a new grille that extends through the front bumper. In the RC this design feature works so well, that it seems like the designers had this car in mind when they came up with the idea!

The cabin with orange upholstery makes this grey demo car still special. The bucket seats are rather large, so that even Europeans sit comfortably. Even at shoulder height they offer enough width, and that's something several of the German competitors can learn from.



Behind the steering wheel a large rev counter can be found. Next to it is a small speedometer, exactly the way it should be in a sports car. But looks are deceiving, because in fact the RC has a big display behind the steering wheel on which all kinds of information can be shown.

The RC F is electronically limited to a top speed of 270 km/h (168 mph), but the dial of the analogue speedometer goes up to 340 km/h (212 mph). When asked how fast the car would be without a limiter the engineer just grins and mumbles that he designed the speedometer this way for a good reason...

V8

That's because the eight-cylinder in the front develops no less than 477 PS / 530 Nm (Japanese specs). Lexus opted for an eight-cylinder because "a six-cylinder wouldn't produce the same sound and isn't as mighty", according to Iwasaki. With a turbo engine the fun would be over too quickly. A hybrid engine would make the RC F even more powerful and comfortable, but such a construction would be too costly and would affect the pure character of the RC F.



Experts know that the IS F was also powered by a 5.0-litre V8. For the RC F just the outer shell has been carried over. Almost all moving parts and supporting parts (cooling, exhaust system, etc.) have been altered. Only the eight-speed automatic gearbox has been copied verbatim.

Just like Iwasaki meant it to be, the RC F builds up to an apotheosis. When driving calmly the RC F isn't aggressive. This athlete is even on the boring side! The only difference against a regular RC is the stiffer suspension and that isn't disturbing at all (because the regular RC is a bit on the soft side).



Going along with traffic the V8 purrs happily and is relatively fuel efficient. The test drive took place in Japan, where speed limits are extremely low. On the open roads maximum speeds are between 50 and 80

km/h (30 to 50 mph). That's why the promised fuel economy of 8 litres per 100 km (35 mpg) could easily be achieved.

Performance

But... the RC F has a different side! Push the pedal to the metal and the mighty V8 takes a breath, howls, roars, yells and the RC F launches itself towards the horizon. This is the type of car that's so fast that most senses simply cannot cope. The landscape changes into a blur and the other cars seem to be frozen in time!

The rear wheels can handle the power pretty well, and like Iwasaki says: "four-wheel drive is boring". Thanks to the firm suspension the driver and can easily communicate with the mechanics. During the drive the speeds kept building up and the car could eventually be "positioned" using the throttle.

The ring road of Tokyo is famous and renowned for dare devils who race their cars in the middle of the night on the many banked curves. The mighty sound of the RC F echoes between the tall buildings around the ring road and for a brief moment the test driver feels like one of them. If that doesn't bring a smile to the face...



Conclusion

Is the Lexus RC F capable of putting a smile on the face of everyone who drives it? Yes, without a doubt. But... most cars with as much power as the RC F can do the same. Yet the RC F is different from the competition.

At low speeds the RC F offers more comfort and more refinement. In daily traffic the RC F isn't tiring or pushy. Even practical issues haven't been forgotten. The cabin space is okay and the RC F is easy to manoeuvre.

At high speeds the RC F is as sharp as the European competitors. Lexus opted for a pure sports car set-up: an oversized, naturally aspirated engine in the front which powers the rear wheels. That means a lot of freedom for expert drivers, while the electronics allow less experienced drivers to fully enjoy the RC F ■



Specifications

Lexus RC F F

Size and weight



Length x width x height	470 x 185 x 139 cm
Wheelbase	273 cm
Kerb weight	1.765 kg
Trailer	unknown
Trailer - braked	unknown
Fuel capacity	66 l
Luggage space	366 l
Tyre size	255/35R19

Engine and performance



Capacity	4968 cc
Cylinders / valves	8/4
Max power	477 PS @ 7100 rpm
Max torque	530 Nm @ 4800 rpm
Drive	rear wheels
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	4.5 secs
Top speed	270 km/h
Average mileage	12.2 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	unknown
Mileage extra urban	unknown
CO2 emissions	251 gr / km

Price

Price	Â£ 59,995
Price base model	Â£ 59,995