



## Lexus RX

### Gentle giant

Review | The Lexus RX is known to be a true innovator. Until the RX came, SUVs (Sports Utility Vehicles) were known to be spacious and versatile but also thirsty. All of that changed when Lexus introduced hybrid drive on its RX model. Now Lexus introduces the all-new RX. Which innovations does the fourth generation of the RX have to offer?

What the fourth generation of the RX mainly has to offer is good looks. While developing the new RX, several designs were presented. The technicians voted for the most conservative design, while the creative minds within Lexus opted for the most extravagant design.

Until the day the car was unveiled, the Lexus team were unsure about their daring choice. As far as Autozine is concerned they made the right decision. Although the RX was never an ugly car, it was a car the owner always had to explain to others (technology, reliability, residual value, etc.). From now on the RX convinces by its looks alone. And, the owner shows he/she isn't afraid of progression.



### Space and specs

The new RX is 12 cm longer and 1 cm wider than the previous generation. This benefits the cabin space. Legroom in the rear is excellent (Lexus suggests the RX is to be used as a chauffeured car), but headroom in the rear leaves something to be desired. The space in the front was good and it still is.

The test car is a so-called "Premier" version and it lives up to its name! The materials used are of the highest quality and the built quality is immaculate. Next to the sterile looking interior designs of German luxury cars,

stepping into the RX Premier is like getting into a warm bath of wealth and class.



However, it's the details that make the RX a true premium car. For example, the wood in the centre console has been supplied by the Yamaha piano factory and has been cut by laser to create a subtle pattern.

Because Lexus presents the RX as an innovative car, the RX offers all the luxury and safety features the carmaker has to offer. Examples are sensors that look ahead with the driver and either warn or intervene in the case of danger. In the dark, one can always use the high beam because the computer will automatically dim the part of the beam that would otherwise blind oncoming traffic.

The centrepiece of every top-spec Lexus is the audio system developed in cooperation with Mark Levinson. As ever, it sounds sensationally good. The sound is clear, realistic and never tiring (even at high values).



A handy feature: a panel in the centre console can be used to wirelessly charge a mobile phone (depending on the make and model of the phone, a cradle might be necessary). Of course a smartphone can be connected to the car, however, the integration isn't as extensive as with other carmakers.

Another trend that Lexus chooses to ignore is saving on the number of buttons. Nowadays, other brands control most functions by a touch screen, eliminating the need for buttons. The RX still dazzles with buttons, knobs, levers and displays.

## Hybrid drive: in theory

The most distinguishing feature of the RX 450h is its hybrid drive line. The RX is powered by a petrol engine plus two electric motors (one on the front axle, one on the rear). By now, other brands also offer hybrid drive, but Lexus chooses another setup.

Other brands tend to opt for "plug-in hybrid" technology for their SUVs. This means a car is charged via a wall plug, after which it can drive electrically for 20 or 30 km. When the batteries are exhausted, a traditional internal combustion engine takes over. The advantage of this setup is that these cars use zero litres of fuel on short drives. However, on long distances plug-in hybrid technology is less efficient because the batteries will just be dead weight.



The RX450h can only drive in full electric mode for a few kilometres. Instead, the electric motors assist the petrol engine whenever it has to work hard and would use more fuel.



This choice benefits a car like the RX in several ways. The most important is that this traditional form of hybrid drive is more effective on long distances. Also, the RX450h doesn't have to be plugged in. Finally, because less batteries are required, the car is lighter and that benefits handling.

## Hybrid: in real life

The RX doesn't bother the driver with all the advanced technology underneath the skin. For those who want to, there's a sporty or an economical drive mode and that's it. In real life, it's hardly noticeable which engine is propelling the car at which moment. The six-cylinder

engine is always in the lead and it has such a deep and mighty sound that one easily forgets this is a "green" car! Also, the RX450h always has so much power available, that this colossus can launch itself as if it were a tiny sports car (together all three engines deliver 313 PS).



Yet, according to Lexus, the RX uses only 5.5 litres per 100 km (51 mpg). During the test drive it was just about impossible to actually achieve this. When driving slowly, anticipating the flow of traffic and reducing the use of the accessories, 6.5 litres was the best possible score. When not taking special care, expect 9 litres per 100 km (31 mpg).

This performance and efficiency is comparable to strong diesel engines from other brands. However, the composition of the exhaust gasses of a petrol engine are less harmful. Also, the combination of a six-cylinder petrol engine with two electric motors plus a CVT gearbox offers more refinement than even the best diesel engine car offer.



## Handling

Ideally, an SUV should be capable on both the open road and off-road. The RX offers more ground clearance (20 cm) than a normal car and the approach angles make it easy to climb steep hills. However, the RX offers no off-road technology (hill descent control, low gearing, etc.). whatsoever. As it should be with an SUV, the RX450h is capable of handling heavy trailers of up to 2,000 kg.

Lexus regards the RX as a big, luxury car that offers even more comfort thanks to the high seating position (easy entry, better view over traffic, less tiring on long distances). The underpinning is tuned for maximum comfort and when driving calmly the RX is as refined and comfortable as a true limousine.



When opting for the Adaptive Variable Suspension

(AVS), this otherwise gentle giant has one final trick up its sleeve to make driving even more pleasurable. At the push of a button the suspension becomes more sporty, which reduces body roll and gives a more direct feeling in the steering. This makes the RX450h come alive, while still being gentle to the environment.

## Conclusion

Which innovations does the fourth generation of the Lexus RX have to offer? Regrettably, not much. The concept remains the same and existing technologies have been merely refined and improved. The hybrid drive line remains the RX's strong point, but other carmakers now offer similar technology (although they choose plug-in hybrid which is only effective on short distances).

When it comes to luxury and safety the RX offers everything a luxury car should. This means this innovative car is up to par, but no longer ahead of the game.

The biggest improvement is in the presentation. Thanks to the new design the RX is now more desirable than ever before, while still being gentle to the driver and its environment. ■



# Specifications

## Lexus RX 450h Premier

### Size and weight



Length x width x height	489 x 190 x 169 cm
Wheelbase	279 cm
Kerb weight	2.210 kg
Trailer	750 kg
Trailer - braked	2.000 kg
Fuel capacity	65 l
Luggage space	539/1612 l
Tyre size	

### Engine and performance



Capacity	3456 cc
Cylinders / valves	6/4
Max power	313 PS @ 6000 rpm
Max torque	335 Nm @ 4600 rpm
Drive	four wheel drive
Acceleration 0 - 62 mph	7.7 secs
Top speed	200 km/h
Average mileage	5.5 l / 100 km
Mileage urban	unknown
Mileage extra urban	unknown
CO2 emissions	127 gr / km

### Price

Price	Â£ 57,995
Price base model	Â£ 46,995