

ARIZONA DRIVER

THE ENTHUSIAST'S GUIDE TO LIFE BEHIND THE WHEEL

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**SUPERCARS
TO RVs AND
OFF-ROAD
TO TRACK**
/ AND MORE

Lexus
LC 500h

VEHICLES • EQUIPMENT • TECHNOLOGY • PEOPLE • EVENTS • DESTINATIONS • ATTRACTIONS



Supercar presence, econocar fuel mileage

Sexy luxury performance coupe has an active personality—and a bit of a temperamental streak BY JOE SAGE

The all-new-for-2018 Lexus LC 500h looks and feels like a \$300,000 supercar, costs \$96,510, has electrified drivetrain torque in spades, and sips fuel at 35 mpg like an econocar.

A non-hybrid LC 500 runs \$92,000. When Lexus introduced the new ES 300h hybrid for 2013, its

price differential was just \$2850, unprecedentedly low at the time. They've stayed true to this thinking with the LC 500 and 500h (pro rata, the \$4510 step up is less than on the ES). The V8 gasoline LC has more horsepower (471 to the hybrid's 384, or 22.6 percent more), while the hybrid's 35 mpg high-

way beats the regular LC's 26 mpg by 19.2 percent, the hybrid's 26 mpg city is 62.5 percent better than the other's 16, and its 30 mpg combined is 58 percent better. Whatever your own driving pattern, the hybrid will pay down its difference every day.

The Lexus LC 500h is yet another example of



how a hybrid powertrain can augment even a performance coupe with exotic aspirations, and no longer be the kind of odd duck they were 15 years ago (and still are, in models left over from then).

We drove the LC 500h from the northeast Valley to ISM Raceway and back—95 miles round-trip—several times during a recent race weekend, and it turned a lot of heads even there, surrounded by a sea of racecars. (Some staff suggested we take it out on the track—and of course bring them along.)

That freeway time amounted largely to accelerating and steering, but the LC 500h was master of all it surveyed, achieved 32 mpg while being driven aggressively, made our long drives painless with its 915-watt Mark Levinson audio system, and surrounded us with a cabin rich, luxurious, and cleverly designed and appointed in many ways.

Our fuel mileage stayed above 30 mpg for the duration, even though the balance of our driving was on local surface streets with traffic, lights and other inefficiencies. Impressive.

The instrument panel and console look neat and complete, uncluttered and clean. Some features are exemplary, such as five drive modes that are electronically switched, so exiting one takes you straight to a most likely other, rather than being three or four clicks away in a mechanical series.

Others, though, are complex and distracting. Key among these is the Remote Touch Interface (RTI). Keeping the screen slimmer and in the driver's line of sight prompted moving much of its control to other locations, notably a touchpad where your

hand falls naturally, next to the (also slim and elegant) shifter. The touchpad is being implemented across the lineup in place of a joystick that preceded it on other models, which had always been finicky and jumpy. But despite its neat, flat nature, we find the new interface also jumpy and finicky.

Is it just us? We scoured user forums online, finding general agreement that it was an improvement over the joystick, but comments were divided between those who hated it and those who swore that if you work with it for a month, or some as little as a week, you'd master and even enjoy it. Maybe someday we'll have that luxury of time with one. Many also had simply found ways to avoid it, by using steering wheel controls or by just forgoing normally key features—such as heated seats.

This car, for its price, stellar fuel mileage, very healthy performance and standout luxury fitments, could take the world by storm—but for that touchpad. If we could buy one without that, we would.

Things that are optional, by the way, are all quite desirable and priced very reasonably for all they offer. (Heck, we're not sure you could buy one wheel this nice for \$1400, aftermarket.)

Test drive this Lexus. You'll have an exhilarating time behind the wheel. You'll enjoy the comforts of its stylish premium cabin. And we recommend you take the opportunity (as we always recommend with any vehicle, actually) to really give the user interface a serious shakedown session. That last point is critical, as the touchpad controller may be a make-or-break detail for some. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

STRUCTURE	.....unitized steel body / frame
DRAG COEFFICIENT (Cd)	.....0.33
SEATING CAPACITY	.....four
HYBRID SYSTEM	.....series/parallel system
ENGINE	..3.5L DOHC 24v V6 alum block/heads
• HP/TORQUE	.....engine: 295 hp / 256.7 lb-ft
ELECTRIC MOTOR	..perm magnet synchronous primary gen, engine start, eng spd control
BATTERY PACK	.....Lithium-ion 84 cell 310.8V nominal, 650V system
• TOTAL SYSTEM POWER	...354 horsepower
TRANSMISSION	.....multi-stage hybrid trans
DRIVETRAIN	.....RWD
0-TO-60 MPH	.....4.7 sec
TOP SPEED	.....155 mph
STEERING	.....elec speed-sense rack & pinion
SUSPENSION	.....F: multi-link / R: multi-link
BRAKES	.....F: 15.7" vented, 6-piston calipers; R: 14.1" vented, 4-piston calipers;
	F/R: aluminum calipers, high-friction pads
WHEELS	.....standard 20" cast aluminum; optional 20" or 21" forged aluminum
TIRES	.....20" F 245/45RF20, R 275/40RF20 optional 21" F 245/40RF21, R 275/35RF21
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	.....187.4 in / 113.0 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	.....5x5 in
TURNING CIRCLE	.....35.4 ft w/ Active Rear Steering 34.8 ft
HEADROOM (F/R)	.....37.2 / 32.5 in (front 36.8 with CFRP roof)
LEGROOM (F/R)	.....42.0 / 32.0 in
CARGO VOLUME	.....4.7 cu.ft
WEIGHT / DISTRIB F/R	.....4435 lb / 42/48 %
FUEL / CAPACITY	.....91 premium unl / 22.2 gal
MPG	.....26/35/30 (city/hwy/comb)
BASE PRICE	.....\$96,510
CONVENIENCE PKG:	Intuitive park assist, blind spot monitor, rear cross traffic alert
	.....1000
21" FORGED WHEELS	.....1440
HEADS-UP DISPLAY	.....900
LIMITED SLIP DIFFERENTIAL	.....390
AUDIO:	Mark Levinson Premium Surround w/ 13 spkrs, 915w Reference Sound
	.....1220
PERFORMANCE PKG:	Alcantara sport seats w/ 8-way power adjust, carbon fiber reinforced plastic (CFRP) composite roof, active rear steering, VGRS, active rear spoiler, alcantara headliner, carbon fiber door sill
	.....5960
CARGO NET - SPIDER	.....65
KEY GLOVE	.....20
CARPET TRUNK MAT	.....105
DESTINATION CHARGE	.....995
TOTAL	.....\$108,605

Below: the Remote Touch Interface (RTI) pad that "allows tapping and flicking"—and prompts some cursing and avoiding.

