

Right-sized powerhouse

BY JOE SAGE

The Lexus SUV and crossover lineup has grown fairly complex, now including UX, NX, RX, TX, GX and LX, along with a fully electric RZ. GX and LX have always been easy to grasp, as equivalents of GS and LS sedans. (Making even that comparison trickier, though, the GS has been discontinued, while IS and ES sedans carry on, though there are not IX or EX crossover equivalents, while conversely, RX has been around for decades without an RS sedan equivalent. And the new TX brings another expansion of the Lexus alphabet.)

A shopper at the smaller end may likely spend some time puzzling among the UX, NX and RX. The smallest of those, the UX, is hybrid-only; the other two offer gasoline-only, hybrid and PHEV (plug-in

hybrid) versions (and that RZ EV).

In a lineup of fully 13 versions of just the NX, running from about \$40 grand to about \$60 grand (see chart in sidebar), our sample is the hybrid, the NX 350h, and at about \$45-50 grand (ours the top trim), this may be a good place for that shopper to start. The NX 250 has lower horsepower, the non-hybrid NX 350 has higher, and the plug-in hybrid NX 450+ higher still, for an overall spread of 203 to 304 hp. The hybrid, though weighing just over two tons, performs nicely at 240 hp. Only the base NX 250 offers front-wheel drive, and even on those, it's only \$1600 more for AWD. All have fuel mileage ratings in the neighborhood of 40 mpg.

We had a 2020 Lexus NX for a week in 2019, at

that time the 300h hybrid, with a combined horsepower of 194—and had headlined that review as “Numbers are only half the story,” noting that when needing to grab freeway lane opportunities, but not having expected to find any great power or speed, “the NX hybrid proved to be a bit of a rocket, all due to the immediate full dose of torque delivered by an electrified powertrain ... all on tap at normal cruising speeds.” And that has now been bumped up by another 24 percent in the 350h.

We commended its styling, which holds firm today, and its features, true to form for a premium-luxury brand. We had also noted that a great many of its features are optional add-ons, good ones, but bringing the price up another \$10 grand last time (or \$8 grand this time, still short of the 450+ PHEV's base price), and you can still add thousands of dollars' worth more. Not subject to option pricing are

its cargo capacity of 22.7 cubic feet while seating five, or 46.9 with rear seats down; 41 inches front legroom; and its 2,000-pound tow capacity—very solid attributes that are all built right in.

We had not looked at our prior piece before or during our time with this one, but once we did, we found we had noted all the same things this time. We again hadn't expected this to be a high performance vehicle, but heading up our first freeway ramp, we noted that “it feels generally powerful,” then, while needing to merge into and then across typically aggressive traffic, we cross-checked our blind spots behind, gave it some gas for precision maneuvers ahead, and updated it to being “specifically powerful,” readily accomplishing every move we were after. And we hadn't even put in sport mode yet. But then we did, easily via a control set on the center stack, and—while also reminding ourselves that we had been driving a powerful performance V8 much of that week—concluded that “this thing feels great!”

Heading back out after completing an errand, we realized it had reverted to normal mode while off, but had not noticed, as its performance was still satisfying. (This gave us an inverse appreciation for these systems resetting, which we often wish were not the case on sport-mode-dependent machines. But in this, it seems worthwhile to not potentially reduce fuel mileage in sport when normal mode performance is great, anyway.) Nonetheless, at the next red light before turning back onto another freeway ramp, we popped it back into sport. And when the light turned green, we not only kept up easily with other fast vehicles, but in fact even restrained ourselves just to be polite.

Despite its compact designation, the Lexus NX looks and feels substantial, with its high beltline and hood outside and generous cabin within. Its format and layout are spacious, strong and useful. All this applies to the full lineup, which we haven't driven back to back. But category by category and item by item, the NX 350h scored straight As. ■

The new Lexus NX is the luxury corporate and structural equivalent of the immensely capable, adaptable and popular Toyota RAV4—the best-selling compact SUV in America for six years running and currently the best-selling vehicle of any type in America other than always-top-sales full-size pickups—and that may be everything many buyers need to know.



SPECIFICATIONS

| | | |
|--|-------|---|
| ASSEMBLY | ..... | Cambridge, Ontario, Canada |
| ENGINE | ..... | (A25A-FXS) 2.5L 4-cyl, 16v DOHC, chain drive, EFI |
| HP | ..... | 189 hp |
| COMPRESSION RATIO | ..... | 14.1 |
| HYBRID MOTOR AND BATTERY: | | |
| HYBRID BATTERY PACK | | |
| ..... | ..... | lithium-ion battery, 259V, 70 cells |
| ELEC MOTOR GENERATORS: | | |
| MG1 | ..... | permanent magnet; generator, engine start, hybrid battery charge |
| MG2 | ..... | permanent magnet; drives front wheels, regenerative during braking |
| MGR | ..... | drives rear wheels, regen braking |
| TOTAL SYSTEM POWER | ..... | 240 hp (max 179 kW) |
| 0-10-60 / TOP SPEED | ..... | 7.2 sec / 124 mph |
| TRANSMISSION | ..... | ECVT, planetary gear unit for gear reduction and power splitting, electronic AWD control system |
| DRIVETRAIN | ..... | full-time all-weather AWD |
| SUSPENSION.....F: MacPherson strut type; R: trailing arm type dbl-wishbone | | |
| STEERING.....electric pwr | | |
| BRAKES.....F: vented 12.91 x 1.1; R: vented 12.48 x 0.71 | | |
| WHEELS...(opt) | ..... | 20-in 20-spoke alloy, silver fin |
| TIRES | ..... | (opt) 235/50 R20 SL |
| LENGTH / WHEELBASE | ..... | 183.5 / 105.9 in |
| TURNING CIRCLE | ..... | 38 ft |
| HEADROOM (F/R) | ..... | (w pano rf) 37.1 / 37.4 in |
| LEGROOM (F/R) | ..... | 41.0 / 36.1 in |
| GROUND CLEARANCE | ..... | 7.7 in |
| APPROACH/DEPARTURE | ..... | 16 / 25° |
| CARGO CAPACITY | ..... | 22.7 / 46.9 cu.ft |
| WEIGHT | ..... | 4080 lb |
| TOW CAPACITY | ..... | 2000 lb |
| FUEL / CAPACITY | ..... | 91+ prem unl / 14.53 gal |
| MPG | ..... | 41/37/39 (city/hwy/comb) |

| | | |
|--|-------|-----------------|
| BASE PRICE | ..... | \$48,795 |
| PREMIUM PAINT: Cadmium Orange | ..... | 575 |
| DIGITAL REARVIEW MIRROR | ..... | 200 |
| 20-IN WHEELS | ..... | 1310 |
| POWER FOLD HEATED REAR SEATS | ..... | 1030 |
| HEADLAMPS: premium triple beam LED w washers and cornering lamps | ..... | 850 |
| PANORAMA MOONROOF | ..... | 500 |
| (TECH BUNDLE): panoramic view monitor, lane change assist, front cross traffic alert | ..... | 1070 |
| ADVANCED PARK | ..... | 480 |
| (TECH BUNDLE): wireless phone charger, digital key (requires subscrip), (4G network) | ..... | 450 |
| CARPET CARGO MAT | ..... | 140 |
| DOOR EDGE GUARD | ..... | 155 |
| REAR BUMPER PROTECTOR | ..... | 130 |
| DESTINATION CHARGE | ..... | 1150 |

TOTAL **\$56,855**
 2024 prices have increased; see below. 2025 pricing is up again, varying, about \$1100-\$2200.

2024 LEXUS NX LINEUP

| | FWD | AWD |
|------------------|---------------|--------|
| NX 250 |\$40,605 | 42,205 |
| NX 250 Premium/+ |43,655 | 45,255 |
| NX 350 | | 44,365 |
| NX 350 Premium/+ | | 47,415 |
| NX 350 F SPORT | | 49,465 |
| NX 350 Luxury | | 50,505 |
| NX 350h | | 44,615 |
| NX 350h Premium | | 47,665 |
| NX 350h Luxury | | 50,755 |
| NX 450h+ Luxury | | 59,905 |
| NX 450h+ F SPORT | | 61,155 |