

Third time *still* a charm

Small size has no shortcomings, many benefits by Joe Sage

Perhaps paradoxically both luxury and sub-compact, the Lexus UX slots in at the smallest end of their now seven-SUV lineup, below—or rather “smaller than,” as this vehicle itself is proof that small is not necessarily “below”—the NX. Its Toyota cousin is the Corolla Cross, but the Lexus comes without that sedan image (really just a name) coloring it.

(Note that in much of the rest of the world, there is an even smaller LBX, direct cousin to the now-discontinued-here Toyota Yaris, which seems another very intriguing formula.)

Lexus UX was new for model year 2019, making it another ambitious launch that soon had its hot new profile lost in the fog of lookdowns and all the rest. But it's here in plain sight now.

As of 2023, UX is now hybrid-only. We in fact had the 2023 UX 250h (also the F SPORT Handling trim and inherently a hybrid) just about a half-year earlier (see our January-February 2024 issue), commending its small crossover efficiency in a high-end build. We hesitated to have one again so soon, but were won over by the differences as a 300h.

In fact, this is our third, and we have praised them all. We had had a 2022 UX a year before that

(see July-August 2022), an at-the-time top trim 250h Luxury hybrid, similarly praising it as a popular size, in a handsome suit, at an accessible price.

If the timeline is not moving fast enough for you already, this sample is a 2025, bringing new shift-by-wire, along with an eight percent power bump, from 181 to 196 horsepower for the combined systems, and bringing shift time to 8 seconds or less (7.9 for AWD, versus 8.4 in the prior build, or exactly 8.0 with FWD). The engine and basic specs are the same on all four trims (or eight counting drivetrain). AWD adds only 120 pounds, which does drop fuel mileage by two points, but improved traction on sand and snow (not part of the fuel economy test) will make up for it.

Okay, more power, more acceleration, but what about that other bragging point, fuel economy? It turns out the new more powerful build delivers 44/40/42 mpg (city/highway/combined) versus 41/38/39 from the prior setup. Win-win-win.

This UX followed the big three-row TX (also in this issue) in a shared two-Lexus week. You might think this would make the reduction in size quite dramatic, but we felt right at home in the UX immediately. Even as we are personally longtime full-

size truck owners (along with a considerable variety of other things in other sizes), we found the UX interior spacious for the individual, while convenient enough to reach around the cabin easily. It's a nice handy package in a category that has proven right-sized for a great many. Even its cargo capacity, while obviously smaller than a larger SUV, beats many a sedan.

Instruments and controls are well conceived, effective and thorough. In fact, some introduce their own sexy details, such as ghosting sweeps of red and green on the needles to indicate (and congregate) your efficiency.

Fuel mileage is stellar in any conditions, so although it was plenty quick even in eco—as noted in prior drives, the hybrid implementation punches well above its numbers—we set our profile to power, with sport suspension and steering. And speaking of steering, we have noted anew, every time, that this turns on a dime, which is one of our favorite attributes (there is no spec given for the current model, but the prior turned in 34.2 feet).

The conclusion remains the same: Lexus UX holds great appeal for a premium buyer curious about something smaller, or a small vehicle buyer wanting to move upscale. Or for someone with no preconceptions. It delivers a value-quality-price-efficiency formula that is great from any angle. ■



SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY	.....Miyawaka, Fukuoka, Japan
ENGINE	.....2.0L 4-cyl 16v DOHC, VVT-iE (intake), VVT-i (exhaust) for Atkinson cycle
HP/TORQUE	.....150 hp / 139 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO	.....14.0:1
HYBRID SYSTEM	
ELEC MOTOR	.....F: perm magnet synchr; R: permanent magnet
BATTERY PACK	.....60-cell 222V Li-ion
HP/TORQUE	.....(AWD) F: 111 hp / 151.9 lb-ft R: 40 hp / 62.0 lb-ft
TOTAL SYSTEM POWER	.....196 hp / (na) lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	.....CVT
DRIVETRAIN	.....AWD
0-TO-60 MPH	.....7.9 sec
SUSPENSION	.....F: MacPherson strut; R: trailing wishbone
STEERING	.....(na)
BRAKES	.....F: 12.01 x1.10 vented; R: 11.06 x0.47 solid
WHEELS	.....18-in split-five-spoke alloy
TIRES	.....225/50 RF 18 95V run-flats, Bridgestone Turanza on ours
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	.....176.97 / 103.94 in
HEADROOM (F/R)	.....(moonrf) 35.75 / 36.38 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	.....42.05 / 33.13 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	.....6.3 in
APPROACH / DEPARTURE	.....14 / 25°
TURNING CIRCLE	.....(na)
CARGO CAPACITY	.....17.2 cu.ft
WEIGHT	.....3575 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	.....regular / 10.6 gal
MPG	.....44/40/42 (city/hwy/comb)
BASE PRICE .....\$46,375	
PREMIUM PAINT: Ultrasonic Blue Mica	.....595
BI-TONE PAINT	.....350
WIRELESS PHONE CHARGING	.....75
COLD AREA PKG: windshield deicer	.....100
HEADS-UP DISPLAY	.....900
DESTINATION CHARGE	.....1150

TOTAL\$49,545
Prices have increased; see below.

2025 LEXUS UX LINEUP

	.....FWD	.....AWD
UX 300h	.....\$37,490	.....\$39,060
UX Premium/+	.....40,690	.....42,260
UX F SPORT Design	.....41,440	.....43,010
UX F SPORT Handling	.....45,955	.....47,525

