

# Top bag of tricks

Power, precision, luxury and a short-run EV trick up its sleeve *BY JOE SAGE*

Lexus RX, with us since the late 1990s and the brand's top-selling vehicle of all time, saw annual sales pass 100,000 in the US (at 114,000) with its new fifth generation in 2023.

Being a top seller earns more than just bragging rights. The gen-five RX was an immediate beneficiary of a new platform, and it offers a new plug-in hybrid (PHEV) version, which Lexus states as having been developed as an "RX-first powertrain."

A wide and low silhouette reflects benefits of the Lexus GA-K platform, which achieves a low center of gravity via new steels, adhesives and welds. Battery-flexible, the platform also provides generous legroom and low cargo loading.

The PHEV system has a combined 83 MPGe rating, a 6.2-second zero-to-60 time and 37-mile driving range rating in EV mode. Set up for home re-

charging from 120V outlets, the RX also comes with a Type 1 connector for public charging. (At its maximum 240V, it can recharge in about 2.5 hours using the standard 6.6 kW onboard charger.)

While lower trims offer FWD or AWD, hybrids and this PHEV are AWD-only (which suits us fine), with an electronically optimized, full-time system.

Choosing the RX that's right for you means diving into a whopping 18 basic variants (see at lower right; note our sample was a 2024, but this charts the 2025 lineup and pricing). You'll see the numerically highest is the F SPORT 500h, with the most power, though it is not the priciest. That would be our 450h+, which comes as Luxury trim only, with a list of top-end features and finishes from semi-aniline leather to heated second row power seats to triple-beam LED headlights. The 450h+ PHEV is

thus \$6,450 higher than the 500h F SPORT Performance, almost \$10,000 higher than a non-plug-in 350h hybrid in Luxury trim, and more than \$22,000 higher than the base RX. Definitely top dog.

Closest in the lineup in many ways is the 350h Luxury, at \$9,340 less. But power is closer to the 500h, thanks to the electrified layer of the 450h+.

Those comparatives alone could lead anyone to this version, plug-in aside. Our drive experience was, as with other recent RX drives, top notch. It corners superbly, steering is dead-accurate, with us noting that it's so good it makes us realize how average most are. Power is plenty and right on tap. Especially with freeway construction currently at record levels, it's easy to get bottled up in any number of ways. In the RX 450h+, given any good opening, we could accelerate instantly into another lane or barrel precisely up an exit ramp.

Suspension is so smooth, though solid, all the time, we were not surprised to pass over concrete

double rain troughs that trip up a lot of vehicles, but took special note of its lack of rebound—no trauma or shock, just smooth sailing, in and out.

The CVT feels like an extra-smooth, invisibly-spaced automatic, per the original intention of this tech (so much so, in fact, that we had to look it up again to doublecheck that that's what it was).

This RX has great fundamentals, and its position by power and price is clear, which brings us back to its plug-in trick. PHEVs are seen by many as best-of-all-worlds—a hybrid and then some, or an EV with gasoline as backup or for distance. To others, they may seem a compromise, not the real thing to a pure EV fan, but "feeling" better than an EV to someone unsure about the whole thing. To some, they're a perfect solution in their own right, because their daily commute can be full electric, with simple gasoline operation for road trips.

Many may contemplate the hybrid vs PHEV equation. PHEVs have more content, so generally cost more (this lineup doesn't have a pure comparison, but its apples and oranges give you a good idea).

It's at this point your comparison may often en-

counter a paradox. PHEVs in general add hardware, most notably a bigger battery, which will typically take away from cargo, fuel capacity, and/or cabin capacity—all of which you need if your basis is a daily EV you can also take on a road trip. Some may wonder if they're paying more for less.

This is a key place where the RX 450h+ PHEV will surprise you. With its new platform, there are near-zero tradeoffs, whatsoever. Legroom, headroom and cargo volume are the same for any RX. The PHEV's gas tank is in fact 2.64 gallons bigger than the 500h (delivering over 90 more miles between gas pumps) and just a fraction of a gallon less than even the non-hybrid 350. And even with its added weight, fuel mileage in the 450h+ PHEV is just one point off the 350h hybrid, virtually tied for the highest in the whole lineup (by far—non-hybrid 350 and performance 500h are in the 20s).

Nice, tight, strong engineering and performance. Luxury level. A solves-everything powertrain with near-zero tradeoffs. If the price of entry suits you, the Lexus 450h+ PHEV is a top winning combo in a proven winning vehicle. ■

**COUSINS:** The curvy hatchback styling of the RX may call to mind some possible pairings in the Toyota lineup, but first impressions may be dead wrong. The closest to RX turns out to be Highlander—a two-box design and always a favorite—and thus also to Grand Highlander and Lexus TX. Beyond that, powertrains, features and finishes are completely different—it's mostly just a curiosity point.

**NEW FOR 2025:** Lexus RX 500h F SPORT Performance adds a limited-run Black Line Special Edition package, with just 500 units in the US, featuring black exterior details, orange brake calipers and 21-inch black split-five-spoke wheels. In addition, 2025 brings the F SPORT Design grade to the RX 350 and RX 350h.



## SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY	.....Miyawaka, Fukuoka, Japan
ENGINE	.....2.5L 4-cyl 16v DOHC, chain drive w VVT-iE and VVT-i, SFI fuel inj
HP/TORQUE	.....180 hp / 168 lb-ft
COMPRESSION RATIO	.....14.0:1
<b>ELECTRIC MOTOR &amp; BATTERY</b>	
ELECTRIC MOTOR GENERATORS (F/R):	
.....	permanent magnet synchronous
BATTERY PACK	.....lithium-ion (Li-ion)
NOMINAL VOLTAGE	.....355.2V
TOTAL MAX SYSTEM OUTPUT	.....304 hp
TRANSMISSION	.....CVT
DRIVETRAIN	.....AWD
TOP SPEED / 0-60 MPH	.....124 mph / 6.2 sec
SUSPENSION	.....F: MacPherson strut; R: multi-link
STEERING	.....rack & pinion elec pwr steering
BRAKES	.....F: 13.39 x1.49 vented disc; R: 13.39 x0.71 vented disc
WHEELS	.....21-in alloy
TIRES	.....235/50R21 101V Bridgestone Alenza Sport A/S
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	.....192.52 / 112.2 in
HEADROOM (F/R)	.....(pano rf) 37.6 / 37.03 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	.....41.06 / 37.36 in
OVERHANG (F/R)	.....42.52 / 37.8 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	.....8.07 in
APPROACH / DEPARTURE	.....15° / 25°
TURNING CIRCLE	.....38.8 ft
CARGO CAPACITY	.....29.59 / 46.19 cu.ft
TOW CAPACITY	.....999 - (or w brake) 3494 lb
WEIGHT	.....4800 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	.....prem unl / 14.53 gal
MPG	.....36/33/35 (city/hwy/comb) / 83 (MPGe)

BASE PRICE	.....\$68,730
HEADLAMPS: premium triple-beam	.....1565
AUDIO: Mark Levinson Premium	.....1160
TECHNOLOGY PKG: digital key (3-yr trial) 4G dependent, digital rearview mirror	.....475
CONVENIENCE PKG: pano view monitor, traffic jam assist (3-yr trial, subscrip req'd) 4G network dependent	.....1420
ILLUMINATION PKG: illuminated cargo sills, illuminated door sills	.....760
POWER REAR DOOR w kick sensor	.....150
ADVANCED / REMOTE PARK	.....480
CARPET CARGO MAT	.....150
MUDGUARDS	.....165
WHEEL LOCKS	.....85
DESTINATION CHARGE	.....1350

**TOTAL** .....\$76,490  
2024 model; see 2025 pricing below.

## 2025 LEXUS RX LINEUP

RX 350 (275 hp)	.....FWD	.....AWD
Standard	.....\$50,325	.....\$51,925
Premium	.....52,575	.....54,175
Premium+	.....56,065	.....57,665
Luxury	.....61,120	.....62,720
F SPORT Design	.....54,905	.....56,505
F SPORT Handling	.....	.....59,175
RX 350h hybrid (246 hp)	.....AWD	
Standard	.....\$52,475	
Premium	.....54,725	
Premium+	.....58,215	
Luxury	.....63,270	
F SPORT Design	.....57,055	
RX 450h+ plug-in hybrid (304 hp)	.....AWD	
Luxury	.....▼ \$72,610	
RX 500h hybrid (366 hp)	.....AWD	
F SPORT Performance	.....\$66,150	