

Road Beat: 2018 Lexus LC500, best of the best



Not enough superlatives for the 2018 Lexus LC500. Photos/Larry Weitzman

By Larry Weitzman

When I wrote my Road Beat review of the Lexus LC500h a few months ago, I was mistaken when I called it perhaps the best car I have ever driven. It's only second best. That title of best car I have ever driven now goes to the "plain Jane" LC500 which coincidentally lists for about \$5,000 less than the 500h version. The base sticker of the plain Jane 500 is just \$92,000. When you consider the quality and performance, it becomes a virtual bargain among super cars. LC500 is the very best.

LC is a fabulous looking car, perhaps the best work ever for

Lexus. It's low, sleek and aggressive with a Coke bottle fuselage, floating roof line, strong hips and shoulders and rippling with muscle which it surely backs up under the hood. Co-efficient of drag is a not so low 0.33, mostly caused by spoilers so it has plenty of downforce. Size-wise, it is a small midsize car with an overall length of 187 inches riding on a very long 113 wheelbase. And if it looks wide, it's not your eyes as its beam stretches across 76 inches. However, it looks deceptively low, but its not at 53 inches.

Powering this not so plain Jane LC500 is the Lexus 5.0L, DOHC, 32 Valve V-8 with all the bells and whistles cranking out 471 of the sweetest horses (at a sky high 7,100 rpm) ever found at a race track, quarter horse, thoroughbred or Indianapolis. Peak torque of 398 pounds of twist occurs at 4,800 rpm. More on torque later.

Power is transmitted to the rear wheels via a 10-speed direct shift tranny which shifts like a dual clutch only smoother. While it has ten speeds its still not a close ration box as the top three gears which are all indirects would never be used on the race track. Matter of fact, on the track you might never get to sixth.



Specifications

Price \$92,995 about \$103,000

Engine

5.0L DOHC, 32 valve V-8 471
hp @ 7,100 rpm

398 lb.-ft. of torque @
4,800 rpm

Transmission

Ten-speed automatic
transmission

Configuration

Longitudinal Front
engine/rear wheel drive

Dimensions

Wheelbase 113.0 inches

Length 187.4 inches

Width 75.6 inches

Height 53.0 inches

Track (f/r) 64.2/64.4 inches

Ground clearance 5.2 inches

Weight 4,280 pounds

GVWR 5,260 pounds

Weight distribution (f/r)
54/46

Fuel capacity 21.7 gallons

Trunk capacity 5.4 cubic
feet

Steering lock to lock 2.6
turns

Turning circle 35.4 feet

Wheels 21-inch alloys

Tires (f//r)
245/40X21//275/35X21

Co-efficient of drag 0.33

Performance

0-60 mph 3.91 seconds

50-70 mph 1.88 seconds

50-70 mph uphill 2.20
seconds

Top speed electronically
limited at 168 mph

Fuel economy EPA rated at

16/26/19 mpg
city/highway/combined.
Expected 32 mpg on the
highway at legal speeds and
22 mpg in rural, suburban
driving.

Performance is not just amazing, it's the quickest car the Road Beat has ever tested. And this is a car for the driver who wants the most out of his motoring. It is performance motoring at its absolute finest. Zero to 60 mph arrives in less than 4 seconds at 3.91 seconds. Passing simulations from 50-70 mph takes just 1.88 seconds on level road and just 2.20 seconds up a 6-7 percent grade. LC500 truly defies the laws of gravity and certainly Newton's first law which is a body at rest tends to remain at rest and a body in motion tends to remains in motion.

Just starting this car will boil your blood as it is the sweetest sounding V-8 ever. The burble and sound are mesmerizing. The throttle blips on downshifts and it spits and barks during upshifts. Under hard throttle there is at least a uniform 1,000 rpm drop between each upshift as the engine momentarily has its ignition cut and its as if rpms are matched perfectly. It's so, so charismatic with real engine dynamics that you learn to use. And it sounds like it has exhaust cut-outs under hard throttle. It's a most beautiful thing and it is the best sounding engine ever. It is the MOST fun you can have in a recumbent position. I hear an F-16 is close competition, however.

The midrange is brilliant around 4,000 rpm when you get a giant torque swell. Remember that monster torque at 4,800 rpm. I could wax on, but by now you get the message.

Fuel economy, considering its world class and super car performance is quite good, even better than its EPA rating of 16/26/19 mpg city/highway/combined. At 70 mph with the engine

spinning just 1,450 rpm the LC500 averaged 33.1 mpg in a two-way run on a level highway. Overall in 450 miles, including dozens of full throttle sprints and some high-performance road trashing it averaged 22 mpg. On balance, those are Prius like numbers. And if you like to cover hundreds of miles in a single bound, this is your ride as it has a nearly 22-gallon gas tank.

Next in the LC500 arsenal of an ultimate car is its handling. Quick electric steering (2.6 turns lock to lock) is beautifully weighted and very direct although it could have more feel. Suspension is a state of the art multilink system in all four corners and its huge 21-inch wheels are shod with 245/40 and 275/35 series rubber (front and rear) acting like vice grips on a copper pipe. And its brakes are turkey platters at 16 and 14 inches plus six piston and four piston calipers. All of these components plus brilliant design make this LC extremely easy to change directions at speed. Almost anyone above room temperature can make this Lexus perform like a GT race car at Nürburgring. It becomes so easy to place the LC in the twisties and picking the right line, that anyone can shine in the LC, besides the fabulous finish.

Ride quality is another super suit. This car is smooth, no matter the surface and its body is bank vault tight and strong. It is also quiet when not into the throttle.

As to safety, I already mentioned the brakes, but it also has every other acronym. But most its important safety feature is this car's capability. Headlights are fantastic.

As you would expect, interior quality is phenomenal. The best leathers and finishes. There is one negative and that is the mouse system to control the radio and other functions. Please go back to knobs and buttons. And it has a trunk, nearly 5 well shaped cubic feet. It looks bigger.

Believe it or not, the basic LC500 V-8 starts at \$92,000.

Among the competition, this is the bargain of a lifetime. Imagine a \$92,000 car being a bargain. It flat out is. My tester had about 10 grand in options including a \$1,220 Mark Levinson sound system. It would be worth it, if I could use the sound system. The Sport package includes a carbon fiber roof and the premium Infrared paint is another \$595. All toll with the obligatory \$995 for the boat suite for the cruise from Aichi, Japan, my ride totaled \$102,890 which is about the same price as the LC500h tested a few months ago. It's a tough call, but either choice will leave you breathless, but hopefully not penniless.

Larry Weitzman has been into cars since he was 5 years old. At 8 he could recite from memory the hp of every car made in the U.S. He has put in thousands of laps on racetracks all over the Western United States.

Talk on South Shore to focus on cougars

Biologist Rick Hopkins will talk about "A Tail of Two Cities: The tyranny of perception based management for Cougars" on Aug. 16 in South Lake Tahoe.

Hopkins will explore the biology and ecology of cougars, the history of predator management and conservation including myths that are often perpetuated, and suggest a framework for modernizing predator management that promotes conservation.

Hopkins will also discuss the recent cougar sightings in the South Lake Tahoe and El Dorado County areas. He is co-owner and senior conservation biologist at Live Oak Associates Inc., an ecological consulting firm in California. He has a

doctorate in wildlands resource ecology from UC Berkeley and an master's in biology from San Jose State University. He conducted a 12-year study on the cougar in the Diablo Range.

The free talk will be at 7pm 3260 Pioneer Trail; entrance to the parking lot is from Saddle Road.

Road Beat: Honda Clarity plug-in hybrid impresses



The 2018 Honda Clarity plug-in hybrid, is an almost perfect EV. Photos/Larry Weitzman

By Larry Weitzman

Clarity was originally a name reserved for Honda's venture into fuel cells, which still exists in the Clarity Fuel Cell. But at a price approaching \$60,000, its sales are very small at about 500 units for 2017. However, the new Clarity Plug-in Hybrid is having robust sales in comparison and for many a good reason.

This new mid-size Clarity looks like a Civic, but it is actually a half inch longer than the all new Accord at 193 inches. But it uses its own smaller wheelbase of just 108 inches. Width is a bit beamy at 74 inches. Its sleek window line gives it that new Civic look, and I would normally say it's a good-looking ride, which overall it is. But probably in the interests of low wind resistance, it has ugly wheel wells with the rears looking like something out of the 1950s resembling a hearse. Maybe the new buyers think "till death do us part."

But this ride is about fuel economy and the type of fuel, in this case gasoline and electrons. Both sources of energy powers the Clarity, singularly or in combination and in combination in two ways. Either the gas engine is connected directly into the front wheels (via a CVT) in concert with the electric motor or with the engine powering a generator providing electricity for the electric motor only. For electrons, Clarity has a 17 kWh L-I battery which can power the Clarity for over 50 miles without the gas intervention. Honda says 47 miles, but I routinely got over 50 miles solely on the battery and it should as the rule of thumb is 3-4 miles of range per kWh and the Clarity as said before has 17 of them at full charge which takes about 10-12 hours on 110v, 15-amp receptacle. Perhaps the lesser range reported by Honda is due to the computer always retainer 2 kWh for operating in hybrid mode, leaving 15 kWh for EV mode.

This is a high-performance car as it knocked off 0-60 mph with

a full battery in sport mode in an average of 7.56 seconds and it really doesn't get rolling until about 20 mph. With a depleted battery the number drops to a still good 8.74 second average. How does it do it? Clarity PHEV has one engine and one motor, with the engine being an Atkinson cycle 1.5L DOHC, 16 valve VTEC unit pumping out 103 hp at 5,500 rpm with 99 pounds of twist at 5,000 rpm combining with powerful 181 hp electron sucker (at 5,000-6,000 rpm) and a substantial 232 pounds of twist from 0-2,000 rpm with a maximum total combined 212 hp meaning you don't get all 181 hp from the electric motor with the gas engine running. But that's some substantial moxie.



Specifications

Price \$36,600 plus \$890 destination and delivery

Engine

1.5L DOHC 16 valve VTEC inline four 103 hp @ 5,500 rpm

99 lb.-ft. of torque @ 5,000 rpm

Electric power

AC Permanent magnet synchronous motor 181 hp @ 5,000-6,000 rpm

232 lb.-ft. of torque @ 0-2,000 rpm

Combined hp 212 hp

Battery

17 kWh Lithium-ion

Transmission

Fixed single speed

Ratio 2.454-0.805 CVT

Configuration

Transverse mounted front engine/front wheel drive

Dimensions

Wheelbase 108.3 inches

Length 192.7 inches

Width 73.9 inches

Height 58.2 inches

Track (f/r) 62.2/62.5 inches

Weight 4,059 pounds

Weight distribution (f/r)
57/43 percent

Passenger volume 101.5 cubic feet

Cargo volume 15.5 cubic feet

Fuel capacity 7.0 gallons

Turning circle 38.4 feet

Steering lock to lock 2.41 turns

Wheels 18-inch alloys

Tires 235/45X18

Performance

0-60 mph with some battery range and charge 7.56 seconds

0-60 mph hybrid only (EV range of 0 miles) 8.74 seconds

50-70 mph with some battery 4.04 seconds

50-70 mph hybrid only 4.40

seconds

50-70 uphill with some
battery 5.62 seconds

50-70 uphill hybrid only
8.15 seconds

Top speed well into triple
digits

Fuel economy EPA rated
(hybrid) 44/40/42 mpg
city/highway/combined, EPA
Electric only mpg equivalent
110 mpg. Expect 60 mpg in
overall driving. In hybrid
only driving expect 40-46
mpg.

Passing times are excellent when you have all 212 ponies with 50-70 mph coming up in 4.04 seconds and the same run up a 6-7 percent grade only slowing a second and a half to 5.62 seconds. However, with a depleted battery those times slow to 4.40 and 8.15 seconds respectively. So, if you are entering any traffic light grand prix or looking to overtake a big semi on a grade, having that battery with more than a minimum charge is a good thing. The tranny is a super smooth CVT unit.

The other half of the Clarity equation is fuel economy. Filling up the electron box takes at least 17 kWh of electrical energy and here in El Dorado County that is normally not inexpensive at 28 cents a kWh or about \$4.76 cents meaning that the cost per mile for energy is about 10 cents a mile. Gasoline is about \$3 a gallon and at 42 mpg which is Clarity's EPA combined fuel economy rating, it works out to 7 cents a mile. When no subsidies are involved the true cost of operation is less with gasoline.

As a hybrid the Clarity is rated at 44/40/42 mpg city/highway/combined. MPGe is rated at 110 mpg. On the

highway at 70 mph in a two-way run it actually returned 45.9 mpg. Overall hybrid use averaged about 40 mpg. However, with nightly charging, and daily use it rarely used the gas engine and the trip computer consistently showed 199.9 mpg as the engine rarely fired. It operated as a pure EV. It's a good thing the engine doesn't fire as fuel capacity is a measly seven gallons. There are motorcycles that carry more fuel. Overall in 518 miles of driving including a round trip to Carson City, the Clarity averaged 61.6 mpg. In that round trip to Carson City of 216 miles starting with a full charge the average was 63.4 mpg, the highest ever recorded by the Road Beat. Awesome.

In level driving expect an EV range of 50-52 mpg. However, in my climb up the Sierra on Highway 50 starting at Missouri Flat Road, the battery was all done in about 33 miles. I picked up a few miles coming into Tahoe from Echo Summit and about 6 miles going down Spooner Grade (about 8 miles of downhill) into Carson City.

Handling for this 2 ton (curb weight is 4,059 pounds) mid-size ride is actually quite good. It certainly has the creds. Listen to this: State of the art four-wheel independent suspension, a quick electric power steering rack that is 2.41 turns lock to lock, big 18-inch (if not to pretty) alloys shod with serious 235/45 rubber and a 62-inch track. It has cornering power and plenty of it, but it's too easy, numb steering and weight keep it from being perfect. But for 99 percent of you and me and 100 percent of Clarity buyers, they will think they are ready for Le Mans.

Ride quality is good and on smooth roads it is very quiet with no tire noise. But when the road is coarse the Michelin Energy Saver tires make some noise. There is no wind and engine noise. It is very smooth riding and compliant. In EV mode it is unbelievably smooth and quiet.

All the safety inventions come with Clarity, including auto

emergency braking and lane departure assist. Headlights are very good.

Leather bathes the interior and the seats are comfortable. Rear seating is copious and comfortable as well. Instrumentation is reasonably complete except there is no tach which would be useless in this vehicle since the engine sometimes acts as a generator controlled by a computer or doesn't run at all in EV mode. It has an excellent trip computer.

The hatchback trunk is large.

Admission to this select vehicle will cost you (Touring model, imagine a Touring model with a 7-gallon gas tank) will set you back \$36,600 plus \$890 for the boat from Sayama, Saitama, Japan. Everything talked about is standard. If we in California paid the national average for electricity which is about 14 cents a kWh, Clarity makes lots of dollars and sense, but at PG&E rates, gasoline is a much cheaper energy source, making straight hybrids more economically sensible. However, there is a performance price to pay with a straight hybrid.

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Music on the Beach benefits TAP

Tahoe Arts Projects' annual Music on the Beach will be Aug. 16 7-9pm at Lakeshore Lodge and Spa in South Lake Tahoe.

It will feature musicians Trey Stone, Niall McGuinness and George Tavoularis.

Bring blankets, low back chairs and food. Doors open at 6pm.

Cost is \$10.

Scooter ‘treasure hunt’: Nighttime chargers make big money

By Carolyn Said, San Francisco Chronicle

Each night after dinner, David Padover invites his kids to join him in a high-tech scavenger hunt through their San Jose neighborhood. They pile into his Subaru Outback, turn on an app and hunt for electric scooters with drained batteries, pressing a button to make their quarry sound a tone and flash lights.

Their usual haul: a dozen or more scooters, which they plug into power supplies in the living room and kitchen.

“It’s instantaneous success,” said Padover, who rises early to drop off the scooters at designated locations to be ready for commuters. “You’re there, there’s a dollar sign for the scooter. It appeals to my competitive spirit.”

As motorized scooters for rent have flooded cities nationwide, a new gig has sprung up – people scouring the streets as freelance “chargers.” It’s easy to start, signing up with a few clicks and then being mailed charging packs, which look like laptop chargers.

Read the whole story

Road Beat: Hyundai Ioniq, the best hybrid you can buy



The 2018 Hyundai Ioniq – the best hybrid you can buy.
Photos/Larry Weitzman

By Larry Weitzman

It has been exactly one year since I last tested a Hyundai Ioniq hybrid, however this time around my tester was a base model stickered for just \$23,210. My prior test vehicle was a top of the line Ultimate edition. Essential they are the same vehicle except for content. But that doesn't mean that this

base unit is a stripper. It isn't as it comes standard with power windows, mirrors, backup camera and most everything else one could want. If you want NAV and power seats, you won't find it on the base.

But there is something that this base model called "Blue" has that was not found in the Ultimate and that is high performance and even better fuel economy. So much so that when I called my prior Ioniq Ultimate the best hybrid with the title "The best hybrid just got better," I was mistaken, as this base Blue model now holds the title the "best hybrid you can buy." Read on and you will understand.

Hybrids main purpose is achieving better fuel economy. The Ioniq not only achieves the best fuel economy of any (non-PHEV) hybrid, it does so with high performance and the lowest price of any hybrid and it is a high content car.

Ioniq is a great looking car in its own right and the best-looking hybrid ever designed as a hybrid with strong shoulders, a sweeping roof and window line and a slightly Kamm tail incorporated into a hatchback design. It is a small compact at 176 inches in length by 72 inches wide on a 106-inch wheelbase. It stands 57 inches tall. But its diminutive size is deceiving as it has the interior capacity of a large car at 123 cubic feet including 26 of those cubes in the cargo hold. The first time I saw one on the road it caught my eye as a great looking ride and actually caught up to it to see what it was. I was surprised to find out that it was an Ioniq.

Nothing has changed under the hood as Ioniq is powered by a 1.6L DOHC, 16 valve, Atkinson cycle inline four-cylinder engine of 104 hp at 5,700 rpm and 109 pounds of twist at 4,000 rpm coupled to a 43 hp and 125 pounds of twist electric motor all driving the front wheels through a super-efficient six-speed dual clutch tranny. Its Lithium-ion polymer 1.56 kWh battery provides the power to the electric motor and has a lifetime warranty. Find that in another hybrid. Bottom line is

a combined 139 hp from the engine and electric motor.



Specifications

Price \$23,210

Power train

16 valve, DOHC direct injected inline four 104 hp @ 5,700rpm

109 lb.-ft. of torque @ 4,000 rpm

Electric motor 43 hp

125 lb.-ft.

Combined system hp 139 hp

Battery 1.56 kWh L-I polymer

Transmission

Six-speed dual clutch automated manual

Configuration

Transverse mounted front engine/front wheel drive

Dimensions

Wheelbase 106.3 inches

Length 176.0 inches

Width 71.7 inches

Height 56.9 inches

Wheels 15 x 6 inch alloys

Tires 195/65 x 15

Passenger volume 96.2 cubic

feet

Trunk volume 26.5 cubic feet

Weight 2,996 pounds

Fuel capacity 11.9 gallons

Co-efficient of drag 0.24

Performance

0-60 mph 7.62 seconds

50-70 mph 4.33 seconds

50-70 mph uphill 6.73
seconds

Top speed Well into triple
digits

Fuel economy EPA rated
57/59/58

city/highway/combined Expect
50-55 mpg in rural country
driving and 56-57 mpg on the
highway at legal speeds.

It is an amazing power system that propels the little Ioniq from 0-60 mph in 7.62 seconds which is 1.3 seconds quicker than my Ioniq Ultimate test. Passing tests also reveal this new-found pep with a 50-70 mph run of just 4.33 seconds and the same run up a 6-7 percent grade only taking 6.73 seconds. My prior Ultimate test had respective performance numbers of 8.91, 4.56 and 8.60 seconds which reflects a significant performance improvement. Compared to a Prius, the Ioniq is about two seconds faster to 60 mph.

About the only difference between the base Blue model and the Ultimate is about 120 pounds less weight. The Blue model also returned slightly better fuel economy, better than any other hybrid the Road Beat has ever tested. EPA rates the Blue at 57/59/58 mpg city/highway/combined and the Blue just about achieves those lofty numbers with a 70-mph highway fuel economy of 55.6 mpg in a two-way run. In a run from Placerville to South Lake Tahoe, the Ioniq Blue returned

exactly 58 mpg in moderately aggressive driving that included several full throttle passing runs. It is the first hybrid tested to basically achieve its EPA numbers. Amazing. It always averaged 50 mpg or better in 400 miles of testing. Zero to 60 mph in 7.6 seconds and 58 mpg. Amazing. And the Ioniq feels peppy and very responsive. Helping fuel economy is the Ioniq's ability to run pure electric at speeds of 70 mph and do so for periods of two to three miles, especially when cruising at 50-55 mph. Even with its puny 11.9-gallon fuel tank, expect cruising ranges of 600 miles with reserves.

Ioniq also has sophisticated four-wheel independent suspension, quick steering (2.66 turns lock to lock) and a tight 35 foot turning circle. However, the standard 195/65 x 15-inch rubber are mounted on 15-inch alloys but with some ugly wheel covers. While 4 pounds shy of 3,000, it still handles nimbly, but the optional 17-inch alloys and 225/45 rubber would make those Mario Andretti wannabes happier.

The ride is very quiet and smooth.

All your basic safety acronyms are present such as ABS, VSM, TC and more. Brakes are strong four-wheel discs (front ventilated) and the headlights are good. It also has an excellent back up camera. However blind spot monitors and lane departure steering assist are not present in the Blue's standard equipment list which is fine with me as I don't have to look for the disabling switch.

Inside is a quality interior with comfortable seats, good rear seat legroom and plenty of soft touch trim. It is surprisingly nice. OK, so the seats aren't powered with electric motors. But they are easy to manually adjust.

Instrumentation even includes a bar graph tach which is nice for a hybrid and enabled me to report an engine speed of 2,100 rpm at 70 mph. It is also an easy way to determine when you are running pure electric as it is hard to feel otherwise.

That's how smooth the Ioniq is. The center stack is easy to use with an HVAC that has separate temp controls for driver and passenger. Nice.

Pricing is a scant \$22,200 plus \$895 for the boat from Ulsan, Korea. The fancy floor mats add \$125 bringing the total Monroney to \$23,210. Hyundai Ionic Blue is the hybrid deal on the market. I would love to have one in my garage. Satisfying performance, great looks, fabulous fuel economy at a frugal price.

Larry Weitzman has been into cars since he was 5 years old. At 8 he could recite from memory the hp of every car made in the U.S. He has put in thousands of laps on racetracks all over the Western United States.

Road Beat: 2018 Lexus NX300h a pleasure to drive



The 2018 Lexus NX300h is going to put a smile on your face.
Photos/Larry Weitzman

By Larry Weitzman

It seems for almost every Toyota, there is a Lexus. With the Lexus NX300h that impression might have some merit. The new NX series, originally introduced for the 2015 model year has some relationship with the Toyota RAV4 (which happens to be the biggest selling compact SUV), sharing some structure, wheelbase and a few internal components. But NX's body, most of its suspension components and the engines are either completely unique or only bear a small resemblance.

Of course, there is absolutely no resemblance in the looks department. NX is sleek and edgy, with its familiar Lexus trademark grille. From the side, the front end stands out, having an almost "nose cone" look. Stand back and check it out. Those edgy character lines add a clever sharpness and purpose making the NX a standout looker. Only the prominent grille detracts, but only slightly as its headlight assemblies

make up for what the grille overpowers.

Size wise, the NX is a compact SUV sharing wheelbase with its distant cousin the RAV4 at 105 inches while stretching out to 182 inches. Part of its muscle comes from its broad shoulders with a beam of 74 inches. Track is a wide 62 inches front and rear.

Powering up the NX300h is a 2.5L Atkinson cycle inline DOHC 16 valve four pumping out 154 hp at 5,700 rpm and 152 pounds of twist at 4,400 rpm. In addition are three motor generators, one acting as an engine starter and generator for both the main systems and the nickel metal hydride battery energy cell. There are two other motor/generators, one with a max hp of 141 hp driving the front wheels and a second, a 67 hp unit m/g driving the rear wheels. But the reality is that the battery's max output is 40 hp which means total output from all sources is 194 hp. The engine drives the front wheels via a CVT.



Specifications

Price \$34,480 to about \$45,000 plus \$925 for destination

Engine

2.5L DOHC 16 Valve inline four 154 hp @ 5,700 rpm

152 lb-ft of torque @ 4,400 rpm

Permanent magnet electric

motor (2)

Nickel Metal hydride battery
output 67 hp

Maximum combined output 194
hp

Transmission

CVT

Configuration

Transverse front engine/
FWD/AWD

Dimensions carpeted floor
mats were free. AWD will add
\$1,590.

Specifications

Price \$34,480 to about
\$45,000 plus \$925 for
destination

Engine

2.5L DOHC 16 Valve inline
four 154 hp @ 5,700 rpm

152 lb.-ft of torque @ 4,400
rpm

Permanent magnet electric
motor (2)

Nickel Metal hydride battery
output 67 hp

Maximum combined output 194
hp

Transmission

CVT

Configuration

Transverse front engine/
FWD/AWD

Dimensions

Wheelbase 104.7 inches

Length 182.3 inches

Width 73.6 inches

Height 64.8 inches
Track (f/r) 62.2/62.2 inches
Ground Clearance 6.9 inches
Weight (fwd/awd) 4,055/4,180
pounds
GVWR (fwd/awd) 5,090/5,200
pounds
Tow capacity 1,500 pounds
Fuel Capacity 14.8 gallons
Cargo capacity (second row
up/down) 16.8/53.7 cubic
feet
Wheels (std/opt) 17X7/18X7.5
inches
Tires (std/opt) 225/65X17;
225/60X18
Steering lock to lock 2.68
turns
Turning circle 37.4 feet
Co-efficient of drag 0.34
Performance
0-60 mph 7.56 seconds
50-70 mph 4.12 seconds
50-70 mph uphill 6.46
seconds
Fuel economy EPA rated
35/31/33 mpg
city/highway/combined.
Expect 35 mpg on the highway
at legal speeds and 31 mpg
in suburban driving.

One of the beauties of this hybrid system is that the rear wheels are only powered by the electric motor, so there is no drive shaft or other mechanical connection from the front engine creating simplicity and saving weight.

Performance is virtually identical to my last go round with the NX300h right after its initial introduction. It knocks 0-60 mph in a satisfying 7.56 seconds and a level 50-70 mph simulated pass takes just 4.12 seconds and the same run up a 6-7 percent grade requires 6.46 seconds, all times from a high-performance SUV. The throttle is very responsive and mid-range is strong. Interestingly Lexus in its press materials lists 0-60 mph at 9.1 seconds. Maybe they need to recalibrate their stop watch as it runs a bit slow or maybe they were towing its maximum allowable load of 1,500 pounds.

Fuel economy benefits from its hybrid powertrain are demonstrable, having an EPA rating of 33/30/31 mpg city/highway/combined. However, the NX does a bit better with a highway mileage of 34.5 in actual testing at 70 mph. The engine spins a low 1,800 rpm at that speed. Overall the NX averaged about 29 mpg in country, rural driving where there is little stopping and brake regen. It will run pure electric under very light throttle at speeds below 45 mph. In a 200-mile round trip from Placerville to Carson City over Echo Summit the NX averaged 32.4 mpg in very aggressive driving. That is a 3-5 mpg improvement over its conventional counterpart with more performance. Fuel capacity is only 14.8 gallons a little over a gallon less than its conventional counterpart. Bigger would be better.

NX is sporty as is the handling. It has all the ingredients, state of the art suspension, including double wishbones in the rear. Steering is a quick electric power rack at 2.68 turns lock to lock. Its 18 x 7.5-inch alloys are shod with 225/60 series rubber allow for a reasonably quick turn in. It's only debilitating number is its considerable mass of 4,180 pounds making it more difficult to change directions. But it does change directions with agility quite well when pushed in the twisties and you will enjoy driving the NX when the road begins to bend.

Because it's a hybrid it should be smooth and quiet and adding

very to both adjectives. It will run as an EV for up to a couple of miles at speeds below 45 mph with a feather foot. Ride quality is on the firmer side, but it certainly won't cause additional bathroom breaks. It handles bumps and other road imperfections like a Lexus.

Safety is basically as good as the operator, but Lexus has installed every safety system one can think of. All the acronyms are present. The lane keep assist was to me a bit intrusive, so I turned it off, but NX hybrid is a very nice drive with strong brakes and excellent headlights.

Inside is a superb quality Lexus interior of leather, soft touch and switchgear, including an electronic tach when using the sport driving mode, switchable on the console. But also, on the console is the touchpad radio controls which need to go away. It is most difficult to operate and distracting.

Price of admission for this near luxo CUV/SUV begins at a reasonable \$38,335 plus \$995 for the boat from Miyawaka, Fukuoka, Japan. Options including the \$4,700 Luxury Package is a worthy addition as are the Triple-Beam LED headlights with AFS (meaning they turn with the vehicle) adds another \$1,515 and the NAV system is another \$1,800. Other options brought the total Monroney to \$49,770. You will want most of the options on my tester so figure a price approaching \$50 large.

Larry Weitzman has been into cars since he was 5 years old. At 8 he could recite from memory the hp of every car made in the U.S. He has put in thousands of laps on racetracks all over the Western United States.

EDSO jumps in to lip sync battle

By Kayla Fitzgerald, Sacramento Bee

Lip sync battles have taken law enforcement agencies by storm across the nation.

Now the sheriff deputies of El Dorado County are partaking. They posted a Facebook video singing Justin Timberlake's "Can't Stop the Feeling" hit Wednesday night.

[Read the whole story](#)

SLT police dog recovering after surgery



Tara

Tara is home after having surgery on July 18 for cancer.

Now that Tara had retired, South Lake Tahoe police Sgt. Jason Cheney is responsible for all of the medical bills.

South Lake Tahoe Police Canine Association supplements the cost of medical bills through the sales of K9 Hero's, and donations for the specific cause.

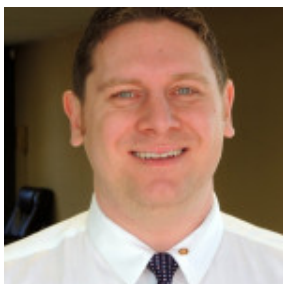
Donations may also be sent to: SLTPCA, P0 Box 17071, South Lake Tahoe, CA 96151 or make one **online**.

Money Matters: Vacationing and volunteering

By Nic Abelow

They could be among the most memorable journeys you take.

Travel with a difference: the essence of the volunteer vacation. You take the trip, you help make the difference for others, and perhaps you see the world differently as a byproduct. If you are thinking about combining travel with some service, there are things you should know.



Nic Abelow

Know the various options. If you're traveling solo, you'll commonly work alongside locals on a community-organized project, and live in dorm-style lodging with other participants. If you have a young family, a homestay may be arranged with a host couple or family, or personal accommodations could be scheduled for you; the service aspect can often be tailored to the interests and abilities of the kids. Animal lovers often work in shelters or in conservation management programs.

How can you book a service vacation? Travel agents and tour companies guide the way. You can even book one through groups such as REI, Discover Corps, Global Volunteers, and the Sierra Club. Some hotels and resorts will give you a huge discount if you are part of a volunteer effort. Be sure to ask what percentage of your fees will go to the local community (and not to organizational overhead).

Some trips emphasize tourism with a bit of volunteering. Often people can only volunteer for a day or two, not a week or month. A new class of vacations responds to that reality. Agencies such as Namu Travel, specializing in trips to the Caribbean and Latin America, structure trips this way; Carnival is even doing this on its cruises to the Dominican Republic.

Nic Abelow is a certified financial planner and LPL financial advisor with Abelow, Pratt & Associates Financial Advisors and Wealth Management in Lake Tahoe.