

CARGAZING



The Lexus IS 500 offers traditional, throaty power from its 5.0-liter V8 engine.

Old-School Grunt

Lexus Offers Throwback V8 Power in IS 500 Sports Sedan

By Derek Price
CARGAZING.COM

Luxury cars tend to boast cutting-edge technology, but the one I'm sampling this week is intentionally old-fashioned in the most important place: under its hood.

At a time when even the fastest sports sedans have eschewed V8s in favor of turbocharged four- and six-cylinder engines — and some are dropping gasoline altogether — the Lexus IS 500 is a delicious throwback with eight glorious cylinders wailing away.

It's the best kind of anachronism.

While Lexus will surely sell a lot more of the four- and six-cylinder IS models, the V8-powered IS 500 F Sport Performance has the most panache.

This car roars and grunts with a naturally aspirated ferocity that the newer turbo engines can't match, proving the old adage that there is no replacement for displacement.

The 5.0-liter V8 in the IS 500 makes 472 horsepower and 395 pound-feet of torque, but its true selling point is the sensation it creates, not just the numbers. There's an honesty in its sound, a heaviness in its feeling, that the new



Lexus has done a good job keeping the IS's cabin up to date, including its digital features, driver assistance capability and contemporary style.

generation of turbo cars can't recreate, try as they might with electronic trickery through the sound system.

Despite its angry-sounding engine, Lexus keeps this version of the IS comfortable to drive on road

trips and commutes. The suspension is somewhat softly sprung, delivering more plushness than harshness, which I thought was a pleasant surprise in a car that looks and sounds so racy.

The steering is perfectly taut,

and it changes direction nicely on winding roads. It's not a hard-edged sports sedan, though. It's more of a refined, quiet, comfortable cruiser that encourages the driver to have a bit of fun in corners.

My one gripe is that the tires don't seem like a good match for this car's performance. They lose grip far too quickly, both laterally and in straight-line acceleration, something easily fixable with summer tires if drivers want to eke more out of their IS.

Lexus has done a good job keeping this sedan fresh and modern, something that can't be said about all brands in today's crossover-obsessed world.

The IS looks sharp, especially with the F Sport design touches, and has a solid, contemporary feeling cabin filled with all the digital screens, infotainment features and driver assistance tech that today's luxury cars require.

It should come as no surprise that if you pick a car with a V8, you're going to get V8 gas mileage, the biggest reason these power plants are disappearing. The IS 500 is rated for 17 mpg in city driving and 25 on the highway.

For drivers who want that authentic V8 grunt, though, this car may be one of the last chances to enjoy it.

Pricing for the IS 500 starts at \$58,270, roughly an \$18,000 premium over the four-cylinder IS 300. The six-cylinder IS 350 also is available starting at \$43,660.

A CLOSER LOOK



AT A GLANCE

FACTS, FIGURES AND RATINGS

What was tested? 2023 Lexus IS 500 Premium (\$61,620). Options: 19-inch matte black wheels (\$2,450). Price as tested (including \$1,150 destination charge): \$65,220

By The Numbers
Wheelbase: 110.2 in.
Length: 187.3 in.
Width: 72.4 in.
Height: 56.5 in.
Engine: 5.0-liter V8 (472 hp, 395 ft. lbs.)
Transmission: Eight-speed automatic
Fuel economy: 17 city, 25 highway

RATINGS
Style: 8
Performance: 8
Price: 7
Handling: 6
Ride: 9
Comfort: 10
Quality: 10
Overall: 8

Why buy it?
It's one of the few sports sedans that still offers authentic, rumbling V8 power. It's comfortable to drive and comes with Lexus' reputation for durability.

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