

## RX Still Intact

### Lexus Crossover Gets All-New Design, Keeps Its Buttery Ride

By Derek Price

CARGAZING.COM

Every time Lexus uses the words “completely redesigned” regarding the RX crossover, I get nervous.

I’m worried they’re going to wreck it.

The things that made the RX wildly popular from the beginning are actually pretty boring, and they don’t need to be “completely redesigned.”

I want the smooth ride to stay the same. I want the carved-in-stone cabin to stay the same. I want the Old Faithful reliability to stay the same.

Fortunately for me and millions of RX fans, the all-new 2023 version seems to keep all that intact.

It’s noticeably better in some ways, especially the technology and spaciousness it offers.

Lexus dumped the old CD player and often-maligned touchpad for a much cleaner, more modern, easier-to-use touchscreen interface on the new-generation RX. It’s a huge leap forward, although still not as slick as what some of its competitors are offering.

One unusual tech feature is Driver Attention Alert, which watches the driver’s eyes and scornfully beeps at you when it suspects you’re not paying attention to the road. It gives you a much-deserved digital finger wagging if you look down at a smart-



The luxurious Lexus RX crossover continues to evolve with an all-new design for 2023. It has a new platform and fresh styling, but the biggest changes are in technology and cabin packaging.

phone, but it also sometimes overreacts and flags a distraction when you’re watching traffic or pedestrians on the side of the road, doing exactly what cautious drivers should. This feature needs some tweaking.

While it’s the exact same length as the outgoing model, the new wheelbase is 2.36 inches longer. That helped designers repackage the interior to create more back-seat legroom and cargo capacity.

A fresh platform makes the new RX nearly 200

pounds lighter than the outgoing model while also being more rigid. It’s a bit lower than the old RX, too, which helps with handling and loading height at the rear door.

There are a lot of changes to the exterior styling, but I would consider them different, not necessarily better. Its new look continues an evolution toward bigger grilles and beefier stances. I don’t think it’s timelessly pretty, but I do think it’s exactly what many buyers want: assertiveness in sheet metal.

This new RX looks like more of a performer than it actually is. My tester, the range-topping F Sport Performance trim with a hybrid 367-horse powertrain under the hood, was engaging to drive but not exactly exciting.

Instead, the RX is at its best when the goal is isolation, not adrenaline. Every version is great at that, thank goodness.

There are four different powertrains on tap, starting with the base RX 350, which packs a turbocharged,

275-horsepower four-cylinder. It’s the version I’d pick because it plays to the RX’s strengths of efficiency, comfort and value.

The RX 350h is designed to get excellent gas mileage by combining a 2.5-liter engine with a battery boost for 246 total system horsepower. The works in Washington rate it for 37 mpg in city driving.

The RX 500h, the version I tested, is built for performance with more than 400 pound-feet of torque. Its gas mileage takes a commensu-

#### WHAT WAS TESTED?

**2023 Lexus RX 500h F SPORT (\$61,600)**

**Wheelbase:** 112.2 in.

**Length:** 192.5 in.

**Width:** 75.6 in.

**Height:** 67.3 in.

**Powertrain:** 2.4-liter four-cylinder plus two electric motors (367 total system horsepower)

**Transmission:** Six-speed automatic

**Fuel economy:** 27 city, 28 highway

#### Why buy it?

The iconic Lexus RX has been completely redesigned. It improves cabin space and technology while retaining the smoothness and quality that have long been its hallmarks.

rate hit but is still not bad at 27 in the city and 28 on the highway.

Unlike the outgoing model, which was available in an extended-length version that squeezed in a third-row seat, the newest RX is only available with two rows.

Pricing starts at \$48,550 for the RX 350, what I see as one of the best luxury values of the year. The fuel-economy-oriented 350h starts at \$50,150, and the quick 500h F SPORT tops the price list at \$62,750.



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A longer wheelbase and lower center of gravity help the all-new Lexus RX deliver sportier handling that doesn’t ruffle passengers’ feathers.

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the interior to create more back-seat legroom and cargo capacity.

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#### A CLOSER LOOK



#### AT A GLANCE

FACTS, FIGURES AND RATINGS

**What was tested?** 2023 Lexus RX 500h F SPORT (\$61,600).

**Options:** AC power inverter (\$550), cold area package (\$100), digital key (\$275), digital rearview mirror (\$200), power rear seats (\$550), heated and ventilated rear seats (\$680), premium LED headlights (\$1,565), panorama glass moonroof (\$500), Mark Levinson audio system (\$2,265), power rear door with kick sensor (\$150), advanced park (\$250), special color (\$595), panoramic view monitor (\$800), traffic jam assist (\$620), carpet cargo mat (\$150), illuminated cargo sills (\$300), side puddle lamps (\$175). Price as tested (including \$1,150 destination charge): \$72,475

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#### RATINGS

Style: 9

Performance: 8

Price: 8

Handling: 7

Ride: 8

Comfort: 9

Quality: 9

Overall: 9

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