

Riding the storm out in style

BY JOE SAGE

The Lexus RX 350 F Sport was our beast and our refuge when the remnants of Hurricane Rosa rolled through the Sonoran Desert this fall, breaking a wide range of weather records, and it was perfectly suited to the task—tough and capable outside, warm and commanding inside, while always making sure to look its best for any occasion.

We would have reflexively preferred the all-wheel-drive version, but truth be told, we had to doublecheck that this was a front-driver, as its suite of electronic stability goodies made that fact never cross our mind, even with enough mud and deep water for a serious challenge even in town.

We might not have reflexively chosen a performance model for these conditions, though we are always happy to receive a Lexus F Sport (or full F) model in any circumstances. The ESC systems ensured this was never a deficit in the worst of the storm, either. Though built for reasonable speed (for a 4464-pounder) and agile handling, everything from its chain-link grille to its 20-inch wheels to its stormy Nebula Gray Pearl paint says, “bring it on.”

We see a lot of white RX 350s, and we’d like to see the RX in the (not available) Flare Yellow paint of an RC F Sport coupe we had a few months back.

But this dark gray really brings out the carved-from-a-solid-ingot nature of the RX’s styling.

Toyota Highlander’s upscale cousin, Lexus RX is inescapably defined by its styling, with complex sheet metal notable at a glance, while even more intricacies are striking over time. Lexus has been playing with these elements for years—the creases and their trademark spindle grille—and yes, it took time, but they have really come together. It varies by model, but in general, anyone who says the grille is polarizing hasn’t looked at them lately.

As for F Sport, this is as good as it gets, and we mean that in top-dog positive way. Several Lexus sedan and coupe models give you a choice between an F Sport upgrade or a full-on F model—a decision between the F’s big-block V8 power and F Sport’s V6 agility—but in the RX, there is no F and no such conundrum. You want sporty? F Sport. You want tough? F Sport. Want top features? F Sport.

Other subsets within the RX lineup include hybrids and a RX 350L model (same wheelbase but a four-inch longer body and three rows). There is a long hybrid, and there is an F Sport Hybrid, but so far not a long F Sport, so your choices are many but not endless. One more equalizer? Most but not all models have a 3500-pound tow capacity. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

SEATING CAPACITY	.....five
ENGINE	.....3.5L alum block-heads DOHC 24v VVT V6
HP/TORQUE	.....290 hp / 263 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	.....8-spd auto electronically controlled
DRIVETRAIN	.....FWD (AWD available)
0-60 / TOP SPEED	.....(FWD) 7.9 sec / 124 mph
SUSPENSION	.....F: MacPherson strut, coils; R: double wishbone, coils
STEERING	.....elec power rack & pinion, electronic assist
BRAKES	.....F: 12.9" vented / R: 13.3" vented
WHEELS/TIRES	.....20x8 / 235/55R20
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	.....192.5 / 109.8
GROUND CLEARANCE	.....8.1 in
TURNING CIRCLE	.....38.8 ft
HEADROOM (F/R)	.....39.4 / 39.1 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	.....44.1 / 38.0 in
CARGO CAPACITY	.....(max) 56.3 cu.ft.
WEIGHT	.....(FWD) 4222 lb
TOW CAPACITY	.....3500 lb
FUEL / FUEL CAPACITY	..... premium max perf / 19.2 gal
FUEL ECONOMY	.....20/27/23 (city/hwy/comb)
BASE PRICE	.....\$48,920
F SPORT PACKAGE:	includes 20" F Sport aluminum super chrome alloy wheels; F Sport exclusive leather interior trim, aluminum pedals, shift knob & meters; F Sport exterior trim; heated/ventilated F Sport front seats; adaptable variable suspension w sport+ drive mode.....incl
DRIVER ASSIST:	blind spot monitor w rear cross-traffic braking and intuitive park assist .....1065
PANORAMIC MOONROOF	w aluminum roof rails .....1850
NAV/AUDIO PKG:	12.3" nav, Mark Levinson 15-sprk premium audio, Lexus Enform app suite, 1-yr destinations .....3200
DESTINATION CHARGE	.....995
TOTAL	.....\$56,030

