

Transitions

BY JOE SAGE

This is the kind of car any time-traveling royal from the distant past would be floored by—with the Executive Package's inclusions in particular—and all the moreso upon realizing it's not just for royalty anymore. Of course things have come equally far since the ability to craft a jewel-encrusted battle sword guaranteed one a favored place in the castle. But when you choose your weapon today, you just about can't lose with this.

The price of entry still keeps it above the heads of many commoners—just that aforementioned package, at \$23,080, exceeds the price of a great many new vehicles themselves, complete. Add the rest of the options and same story, just moreso.

A lot of what makes the LS 500h enticing is included in its pre-option basis, of course—it's the biggest luxury sedan from Lexus, rounded out with advanced hybrid technology that moves this 5000-lb, 206.1-inch-long craft at over 30 mpg.

Its series/parallel hybrid system includes a 295-hp 3.5L aluminum V6 plus two motor generators (one for power, engine start and engine speed control; one with regenerative braking to drive rear wheels), together generating 354 hp total system power and running 0-to-60 mph in 5.1 sec (RWD). Legroom is 41 inches in front, almost 40 in back.

PRICING

BASE PRICE	\$79,980
LEXUS SAFETY SYSTEM+ A: pre-collision w active brake, active steering assist, pedestrian alert, front cross traffic alert, lane change assist	3000
ADAPTIVE VAR AIR SUSP W RAPID HEIGHT	1500
20" SPLIT 5-SPOKE FORGED ALLOY WHEELS	2450
24" HEADS-UP DISPLAY	1200
LED HEADLAMPS, ADAPTIVE FRONT LIGHTING	300
EXECUTIVE PKG W KIRIKO GLASS: quilted-stitch perforated semi-aniline leather interior, 28-way pwr driver seat w multifunction massage, ultrasuede headliner, pwr front seat buckles & heated rear seats, four-zone climate concierge, power side-window sunscreens, 7" touchscreen controller, rear seat knee airbags, Kiriko Glass interior door trim & hand-pleated interior door trim	23,080
PREMIUM AUDIO: Mark Levinson 23-sprk, 2400W Quantum Logic	1940
PANORAMIC VIEW MONITOR	800
WOOD & LEATHER TRIMMED HEATED WHEEL	410
ILLUMINATED DOOR SILLS	450
(GROUP): cargo net, trunk mat, wheel lock, key glove, rear bumper applique	380
DESTINATION CHARGE	1025
TOTAL	\$116,495

The LS 500h is a prime example of a transitional era, as hybrid pioneer Toyota-Lexus applies their knowledge to an ever wider range of vehicles with ever more innovative—yet mainstreamed—technologies. The system is not always transparent. We could often feel its complexities through subtle lags or surges in cornering acceleration or aggressive freeway lane changes, themselves transitions. Sport settings can mitigate this to a degree.

The trackpad interface controller has improved

SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	3.5L V6 24v DOHC alum block/heads, VVT-iW intake, VVT-i exhaust, 13:0:1 compr ratio
MOTOR GENERATOR 1	primary gen, eng start & speed
MOTOR GENERATOR 2	drives rear wheels, regen brake
HYBRID BATTERY PACK	lithium-ion 84-cell: 310.8V nominal / 650V system voltage
HP: ENGINE / TOTAL SYSTEM	295 / 354 hp
TOTAL SYSTEM TORQUE	395 hp
DRIVETRAIN	RWD (AWD avail)
TRANSMISSION	L310 multi-stage hybrid transmission
FINAL DRIVE RATIO	3.615
0-TO-60 / TOP SPEED	(RWD) 5.1 sec / 136 mph
SUSPENSION	F: high mount multi-link, dbl joint; R: multi-link
STEERING	elec pwr vehicle speed-sens rack & pinion
BRAKES	F: 14.0 vented w 4-piston opposed; R: 13.1 vented w 2-piston opposed; F/R: high-friction brake pads
WHEELS	(opt) 20" split 5-spoke forged alloy
TIRES	(per opt) 245/45RF20
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	206.1 / 123.0 in
TURNING CIRCLE	(RWD) 36.8 ft
GROUND CLEARANCE	(RWD w air susp) 6.6 in
HEADROOM (F/R)	(w moonroof) 37.3 / 37.3 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	41.0 / 38.9 in
CARGO CAPACITY	(w/o rear cooler) 15.185 cu.ft
WEIGHT / DISTRIB	(w Exec Pkg RWD) 5060 lb / 51/49%
FUEL / CAPACITY	91 premium unl / 22.2 gal
MPG	25/33/28 (city/hwy/comb)

but remains fairly maddening.

Overall, of course, you will glide through your world quite blissfully in this luxury flagship.

All-wheel drive is available (\$3120, 0-60 in 5.2 sec, 23-31-26 mpg, almost a 3-foot bigger turning circle). The non-hybrid LS 500 starts at \$75,450. ■

