

Lexus RX 350L: Glamour and glitz for seven sophisticates

By  Ané Theron

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Fancy driving a R1.6m Lexus LX, but 1) you're only good for one-million bucks and 2) you need to seat seven behinds on a regular basis? Well, Lexus has come up with a solution: The Lexus RX 350L. And the designers did such a stellar job, that supersized-RX is just as handsome as its more compact stablemates, despite its elongated nether regions.



Rear reconstruction

To make room in the back for additional offspring, a rear-end redesign was in order. The wheelbase stays the same, but the roofline had to be extended. The second row of seats has also been positioned slightly higher so the third-row occupants have somewhere to put their legs.



A space-saver spare wheel now sits on the underside of the RX for more boot space, and two curtain airbags (there are ten in total) stretch right to the back to protect the rearmost little darlings. The RX has five-star safety rating.

Easy does it

The third row is easily accessible - just pull a one-touch lever and manually move the second row forward - but the two seats in the third row are almost exclusively for children, and Lexus makes no bones about it.

You do have the option of moving the seats of the second row forward almost 5cm, should adults have to ride in the back. Third-row occupants have two central cup holders and their own control panel for the three-zone climate control.



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The second row is ultra-luxurious and offers nearly the same comfort features that the front passenger and driver are privy to: a central cubby with two USB ports, highly supportive and heated leather seats, enough room in which to kick back and relax, and 12-Volt power sockets for additional devices.

The front-seat inhabitants also have ventilated seats that are electronically adjustable in ten different ways, as well as a wireless charging pad underneath the impressive 12-inch infotainment screen.

You can access the infotainment system by using the Lexus Remote Touch controller as a mouse, or via the satellite controls on the elegant steering wheel. The controller needs a precise touch and a steady hand, especially when entering an address (letter-by-letter) on the standard Satnav.



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All of this is standard fare, included in the purchase price - so no expensive boxes warrant ticking. There's also a moon-roof overhead, and a 12-speaker Mark Levinson sound system is included, for your aural pleasure.

Inner beauty

Inside the opulent cabin, you can feast your eyes on laser-cut wooden inlays, sumptuous leather and classy chrome. As in all the Lexus models of today, the interior build quality is impeccable.

“ Did you know that there are seven Lexus master craftsmen or ‘Takumi’ assigned to each Lexus, who oversees that every tiny detail inside the vehicle has been finished off to perfection? ‘Takumi’ is an ancient Japanese concept and tradition that “expresses the essence of artisan craftsmanship”. ”

As a Lexus Takumi with over 25 years of experience, one of your skills would include folding an Origami-cat with your non-dominant hand in under sixty seconds!



Where space for Gucci bags, cases of wine, and designer shopping bags are concerned, the RX 350L's boot can accommodate a large stroller if all seats are upright. Simply press a button to fold the third row away, and *voilà!*, you can now stow 432 litres' worth of luggage.

If you ever need to help a friend move his studio apartment, fold the second and third row flat and you'll have 966 litres' worth of space to fill. (Shut the powered boot-lid by pressing a button when you're done.)

Driving the RX350L

At over two tonnes, you do feel the all-wheel-drive RX's significant heft, especially up a curvaceous mountain pass at a hurried pace. The 3.5-litre naturally aspirated V6 engine (with 216kW and 358Nm) loses a smidge of power against the five-seater RX 350 EX (with 221kW and 370Nm), as one of the two exhaust outlets had to be omitted during the redesign.



But the RX is not designed for track days or to ease the symptoms of a mid-life crisis, despite its lively sport-setting. It's built to ensconce you and your privileged loved ones in absolute luxury, comfort, and safety, while it makes a serious style statement.

Should you make debt?

I would, if I had the money. Compare it to its Teutonic rivals, and you'll notice that the list of standard features on the RX's [spec sheet](#) is a much longer one. Another feather in Lexus's cap is its four-year/100,000km warranty and maintenance plan, and how high it scores in vehicle quality surveys.

If quality and excellence are what you're after, you won't be disappointed by the RX 350L.

ABOUT ANÉ THERON

Ané Theron started her career in motoring journalism at Rapport, and moved over to City Press after a few years, before settling into a full time career at AutoTrader SA. She's at her happiest driving along twisty coastal roads, or crawling across rugged terrain in a beefy 4x4, or driving through the desolate Karoo. And taking photos along the way, of course.

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