

Lexus RX Icons: First Generation

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When it first debuted at the North American International Auto Show in 1998, the Lexus RX 300 was the world's first-ever luxury crossover utility vehicle (CUV). By combining the best features of a luxury sedan and a sport utility vehicle (SUV), the RX ushered in a new standard of comfort, design and performance for manufacturers worldwide.

Approximately 42,000 RX 300s were sold that year alone, and CUVs have been growing in popularity ever since. Nearly a quarter century later, the fifth generation of the RX is now getting ready to go on sale later this year. Completely redesigned from the wheels to the roof rails, the [all-new 2023 Lexus RX](#) features some of the same luxury and performance-driven qualities that have always distinguished it from the rest: a comfortable and quiet in-cabin atmosphere, refined ride comfort, and excellent grip and drive force control.

Equipped with a new global platform, two all-new grades, an available Digital Key, Lexus Safety System+ 3.0 and Lexus Interface Multimedia System, the 2023 Lexus RX is in a class all its own.

This series will look at the preceding generations and how the RX maintains a modern feel and design while staying true to the original RX 300 concept of seamlessly blending luxury and capability.



First Generation: 1999-2003

Convenience & Performance — Best of Both Worlds

The Lexus RX 300 set the bar for luxury CUVs everywhere. The concept behind it was a vehicle as comfortable as it was capable, both on and off the pavement. With a 220-horsepower 3.0-liter double-overhead cam V6 engine, available 4WD, and up to 75 cubic feet of cargo space, the 1999 RX 300 delivered. Flexible seating for five and interior noise reduction gave it a luxurious, passenger-focused feel, but advanced acceleration, handling and traction gave it sport-utility power.

Throwback facts:

- The RX 300 is structurally different from an SUV. Instead of using conventional body-on-frame construction, the original CUV used a car-based monocoque construction, keeping the vehicle lightweight yet highly rigid.
- With individually reclining seatbacks and rear seating that could slide almost five inches fore/aft, the RX 300 boasted over 30 cubic feet of cargo space even with passenger space maximized.

The Lexus RX continues to redefine the luxury crossover vehicle. The latest generation is no exception: Innovative computing, enhanced materials and high-stress performance testing have made the [2023 Lexus RX](#) the best one yet.