

Looking Back: The Evolution of The Lexus RX

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When it first debuted 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 first 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. While 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, Lexus Safety System+ 3.0 and Lexus Interface Multimedia System, the 2023 Lexus RX is in a class all its own.

This series looks at the 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.



Second Generation: 2004 – 2009

Luxury and Sustainability Without Sacrifice

The second generation of the Lexus RX offered more of everything: a more powerful engine, more legroom and more options like 40/40/40 split design rear seats. The 2004 Lexus RX 330 boasted a 230-horsepower 3.3-liter V6 engine and five-speed automatic transmission, paired with a strengthened structure and a revised available all-wheel drive system for a more comfortable and controlled drive.

Its hybrid counterpart, the RX 400h, came to be known as the world's first luxury hybrid sport utility vehicle. With the same engine as its gas counterpart but paired with three electric motor/generators, the front-wheel drive 2006 Lexus RX 400h had an EPA-rated city/highway fuel economy 28/25 miles per gallon without sacrificing speed or cargo space. The hybrid history maker no doubt made an impact on what guests can currently choose from when it comes to electrified powertrains in the RX portfolio as well as the rest of the Lexus lineup.

Throwback facts:

- The RX 400h was Lexus' first hybrid model. In just over 10 years following the launch of RX 400h, Lexus sold more than one million hybrid vehicles worldwide.
- The RX 400h was also one of the first Lexus vehicles to offer intuitive Vehicle Dynamics Integrated Management (VDIM), which was designed to help the driver keep better control of the vehicle by adjusting its speed, throttle, braking, steering and headlights.



Third Generation: 2010 – 2015

Fueling Luxurious Comfort and Design

With advanced available all-wheel drive, ample cargo space and an abundance of design flourish, the third generation of the Lexus RX was built and designed with precision to enhance the RX 350's and 450h's speed, control and fuel efficiency. While both models were equipped with a 3.5-liter V6 gas engine, the 2010 RX 450h was designed to deliver up to 295 total system horsepower. The hybrid model also boasted exhaust-heat recovery

and cooled exhaust-gas recirculation systems, allowing for improved fuel economy and emissions compared to previous RX generations.

Throwback facts:

- The third-generation Lexus RX 350 and 450h were the first RX models with a dual-zone cockpit design that effectively separated the space into a display zone (that provided information) and an operation zone (where controls were located).

The third-generation RX exterior featured an inverted-trapezoid front design, a horizontally integrated rear shape, and a pronounced shoulder that gave it a strong stance and powerful expression.



Fourth Generation: 2016 – 2022

Building on Greatness

The fourth-generation Lexus RX 350 and 450h offered upgraded luxurious features when they debuted in 2016. Thanks to increases in width and length by 0.4 inches and 4.7 inches, respectively, and a wheelbase lengthening of nearly 2 inches, the fourth-generation RX's interior provided passengers with ample leg, head, and cargo space.

Its exterior benefitted from several design updates, including a new fascia featuring an emboldened spindle grille, sharp character lines that added an unexpected flair to the vehicle, and new LED taillights. The RX 350 and 450h were both powered by a 3.5-liter V6 engine, giving them more horsepower than the previous generation.

Throwback facts:

- The fourth-generation RX was the first Lexus to feature L-shaped taillights that wrapped around the sides and back of the vehicle, and, and glowed laterally from the body to the back door.
- This was also the generation that introduced a panoramic roof option on the RX, further enhancing the passenger in-cabin experience.

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Fifth Generation

Reimagining Greatness

The all-new, fifth generation Lexus RX reimagines greatness that sets it apart from its predecessors. The best version of the RX to-date has been realized thanks in part to innovative computational analysis, an integration of enhanced materials and repeatable high-stress testing performed at the Toyota Technical Center Shimoyama. The technological, stylistic and state-of-the-art improvements offers RX a highly diverse powertrain portfolio

encompassing Lexus Electrified variants, as well as the Lexus-first DIRECT4 all-wheel drive system. And, for the first time ever, a plug-in hybrid electric (PHEV) variant will be available.

To help meet the needs of guests, the all-new 2023 Lexus RX will be offered in six grades: Standard, Premium, RX-first Premium+, Luxury, F SPORT Handling and RX-first, F SPORT Performance. The new expression of Lexus design is realized with the spindle body exterior design expressing athleticism and finesse in a sophisticated, dynamic shape. Inside the RX, the tazuna concept, a design vision inspired by the Lexus Driving Signature, intuitively orients all essential controls and information (e.g., gauges, available Head-Up Display, meters, etc.) within the driver's reach and forward sightline and directs the space's expansive, minimalist layout.

Fun facts:

- The 2023 RX rides atop the GA-K platform, which is 198 pounds lighter than the previous platform and increases the front/rear couple distance, resulting in more legroom for rear passengers. RX guests will also enjoy increased cargo space and a lowered back door trim to decrease loading height.
- The 2023 Lexus RX comes equipped with Lexus Safety System+ 3.0. And depending on the grade, the all-new RX will be offered in 10 exterior color options and six interior color options with four possible ornamentation styles.
- The 2023 RX introduces the RX 500h F SPORT Performance AWD, the first performance-focused hybrid for the RX lineup.

The Lexus RX continues to redefine the luxury crossover vehicle, adding extraordinary refinement to its legacy. The all-new fifth generation [2023 Lexus RX](#) is no exception and ushers in a new era for the luxury crossover segment.