

LEXUS RX450h L *Premier* 2018

Sport Utility Vehicles (SUVs) seem to be the flavour of the last few years in Britain. They are often as bland as a bowl of watery noodles, but we still buy them.

SUVs don't need to be like this though – and Lexus seems to have unearthed the formula to make them satisfying. Naturally, the Japanese automaker would have to kill me if it told me what the secret is, but it has let me drive one for this review.

Now, I always try and remain impartial when test-driving cars – I need to be if my credibility as a motoring journalist is to stay solid. So, it came as a surprise to me how the SUV I was handed the keys to is as far from bland as you can get.

By the way I'm building this motor up, you might think it's a rocket-fuelled beast I'm about to review; well, no, it isn't. This is a sizeable family-friendly machine – and the one I got behind the wheel of is the RX450h L Premier – an extended, seven-seat variant of Lexus' top SUV, the RX450h.

Comfort, quality, reliability; this is a family SUV with added flavour.
Tim Barnes-Clay gets behind the wheel



If you want your SUV to give you loads of kit, brilliant quality, superb refinement and oodles of comfort, then this Lexus could be the vehicle for you. Of course, it's not as engaging as a BMW X5 to pilot, but it will make you happy when at the tiller.

Why? Well, if, like me, you have a bunch of kids (I have three), then you will struggle to find a non-German car quite so luxuriously accommodating. What's more, the Lexus name has cachet, and it has an excellent reputation for reliability.

By adding 110mm behind the back wheels and two more leather chairs, Lexus has done a good job when it comes to fitting extra occupants into the RX450h. This third row of seating folds electrically out of the load area's floor, while the second tier of chairs slides to allow you access to the rearmost set.

What the L variant of the RX450h does is give you a boost in boot room from 453 litres to 495 litres, with a fresh maximum of 966 litres with all five rear seats collapsed. Useful stuff.

And from behind the wheel, other than the more erect rear windscreen being more distant, driving the seven-seater doesn't feel any different to the regular five-up model. Visibility is just as good, making the RX L an easy set-of-wheels to live with.

The emphasis is on comfort, beginning with the cooled and heated front seats that keep you feeling supported and fatigue-free on long journeys. The ride is correspondingly accommodating over blemished British bitumen, while the muted hybrid powertrain adds a bit of electric power at low speeds.

Certainly, the hybrid arrangement, encompassing

Fast Facts
 (2018 Lexus RX450h L Premier – as tested by Tim Barnes-Clay)
 Max speed: 112 mph
 0-62 mph: 8.0 seconds
 Combined mpg: 47.1
 Engine layout: 3,456cc
 6-cylinder hybrid
 Max. power (PS): 313 (full system output)
 CO2: 138 g/km
 Price: £63,635



a 3.5-litre V6 petrol engine and a couple of electric motors, helps efficiency. In the real world, you can easily achieve 45mpg around town or 35mpg on a motorway commute. That is more impressive than many comparable diesel-driven seven-seater SUVs.

The steering isn't as sharp as you will find in a BMW SUV, but it's no issue as the Lexus' whole character doesn't lend itself to being athletic – it is all about being chilled out in cosy luxury. There's lots of kit on the Premier version of the RX L, and there is a large infotainment screen that's controlled via a slightly fiddly mouse. What's more, this car comes with an audio treat in the form of a Mark Levinson 15-speaker sound system.

The RX450h L Premier feels special in every department – especially the cabin. On top of this, you have that bullet-proof Lexus dependability. And that last point is what you need when looking for a plush car that will serve you and your family well.