

Lexus RX

Lexus introduced its first SUV, the RX 300 in 1999. In its second month, the Lexus RX 300 not only outsold its archrival, the Mercedes Benz M-Class, but also all Infinity cars and trucks combined. Since 1999, the RX has been the best selling model in the Lexus line of vehicles.

- The Lexus RX 300, with its winning combination of luxurious sedan and versatile sport utility vehicle, was named Motor Trend magazine's 1999 "Sport/Utility of the Year." In the first year Motor Trend rated Sport Utility Vehicles, they said, "the RX 300 has posted a new standard by which all future sport utilities will be judged."**
- The RX 300 was one of the first true crossover sport utility vehicles combining the ride and features of a luxury sedan with the body styling of an SUV.**
- Introduced in 2006, the Lexus RX400h was the world's first hybrid luxury SUV.**

When Lexus engineers were assigned the task of building a luxury SUV, they decided against building the new vehicle on an existing truck frame like other SUVs at the time. Instead, Lexus built a unibody frame specially designed to give the RX a sedan-like feeling. Engineers then added 4-wheel independent MacPherson struts to smooth the ride for both drivers and passengers.

Time writer Sue Zesiger said this about her experience driving an RX 300 for the first time in 1998: "With the RX 300, Lexus has accomplished an enviable marketing ploy: It has opened up a new niche in the highly profitable, fickle SUV realm. One of its chief rivals, the new Mercedes ML320, took a giant step toward providing car like luxury in what had been a truck market; the Lexus takes a step further in that direction. Another competitor, the boxy Land Rover Discovery, seems cumbersome by comparison."

To illustrate the completely new design of the RX, Lexus hired Barbara Eden, the star of the popular 1960s show "I Dream of Jennie." Reprising her role as a genie in a bottle, Eden used magic to transform an ordinary SUV into a completely new RX.

In 2002, Lexus teamed up with Coach, a premier manufacturer of leather goods, to build a limited edition RX. The vehicle featured Coach Edition perforated leather-trimmed seats, Coach badging on the front doors and the Coach logo on the floor mats. Exterior highlights included monochromatic cladding and a honeycomb grille. The interior trim and steering wheel were a new shade of Bird's Eye Maple accent, replacing traditional walnut. Buyers received a black Coach Hampton cabin bag and a demi-pouch to go along with the vehicle



In 2003, the second generation Lexus RX 330 became the first Lexus to be built outside Japan when Toyota announced plans to begin building it at its Canada manufacturing facility. It also began building the RX engine and powertrain at Toyota's West Virginia engine and transmission plant.

The 2003 RX featured an available adaptive front lighting system that swiveled the headlamps independently to help light curved roads, and an optional DVD-based Lexus navigation system that included a rear back up camera. It also had a longer and higher body and a bigger engine.

By 2004, the popular RX commanded a whopping 28 percent of the luxury SUV market.

In 2005 Lexus introduced the RX 400h gas electric hybrid in both front wheel and 4WD versions. The RX 400h FWD delivers zero-to-60mph acceleration in 7.5 seconds, better than many V8-powered mid-size luxury SUV competitors, but with fuel efficiency more typical of a 4-cylinder compact sedan.

The RX is by far the biggest selling Lexus model selling more than 108,000 RX 330 and 400h units in 2005.

In 2006, Lexus introduced the third generation 2007 RX 350 with a 3.5 liter V-6 engine, 5-speed automatic transmission and all-wheel-drive.

Standard and optional luxury and safety features included:

Lexus DVD navigation system

- Lexus Memory System for power driver's seat
- HomeLink universal transceiver to operate compatible garage gate home lighting and home security system
- Electrochromic outside mirrors
- Remote-linked moon roof and window opening
- Impact-dissipating ribbing in pillars and upper headliner
- Optitron instrumentation

