

Lexus LS 600h L for hybrid luxury

Written by Frank S. Washington, NNPA Columnist, AboutThatCar.com
Tuesday, 13 January 2009 01:58



DETROIT, MI – The Lexus LS 600h L sedan is a 5,000 lb contradiction.

It's a hybrid; that's what the h signifies. And as a hybrid it is meant to be easy on gasoline. But the car I test drove had a base price of \$104,900. Add on extras, and there weren't many, and the sticker rose to \$116,759. My point is that somebody who can afford the LS 600h L you'd think really isn't too concerned about the price of gasoline or how much of the stuff the car is burning.

Oh, the L signifies long-wheel-base which meant the rear seats were really expansive.

There's so much that I could write about the LS 600h L. Let's start with the power train because that's what makes the LS 600 h L. It had a V8 engine and two electric motors. Combined they made the equivalent of 438 horsepower. The car also has an electronically controlled continuously variable transmission.

One electric motor served as the primary generator and engine starter. While the other electric motor drove the wheels at very low speeds and when a boost was needed. It also collected the energy and fed it to the battery during regenerative braking.

My test car ran so smooth that I had to check the tachometer to see if it was shutting off when stopped. In other words, there was little difference in vibration between engine on and engine off. The car had an air suspension with three settings. I chose sport which provided a firm road, but the ride was not as firm as I expected. They could tighten that ride selection up a bit.

If you've got the money, it seems to me that the overriding reason to purchase an LS 600h L is because it is better for the environment. The less fuel it burns the less particulates it spews into the atmosphere. The fuel economy was 20/22 mpg in city and hwy driving. That may not

Lexus LS 600h L for hybrid luxury

Written by Frank S. Washington, NNPA Columnist, AboutThatCar.com
Tuesday, 13 January 2009 01:58

sound like much but gasoline powered vehicles with the same horsepower get half as many mpg.

And it has a 600 designation because Lexus thinks the car's performance mirrors that of 12 cylinder powered luxury sedans from Germany. The car gets from zero to 60 mph in 5.5 seconds.

Eight or 12 cylinders, the LS 600h L has just about every creature comfort available in an automobile except massaging seats and a nighttime vision camera. The back seats were heated, cooled, had power headrest and could slide and recline. There was also a rear seat entertainment system.

Since the temperature remained below 30 degrees for the entire week that I had the car, I was impressed with the heated steering wheel, which warmed up rapidly. The car had keyless entry which came with a pushing stop and start. There were 19-inch wheels and it had satellite radio which is one of my favorite accessories.

Some luxury sedans provide an ambiance and the Lexus LS 600h L certainly belonged to that group. The cabin felt like a study, adjustable seat warmers made it feel like a fire place was at work. And I loved the fact that I didn't have to go through a bunch of stuff to turn the display screen off.

My only complaint about the LS 600h L was that connecting Bluetooth was not intuitive. I got so caught up, I didn't open the owner's manual to get the instructions. Then again, I'm all thumbs when it comes to technology.

Frank S. Washington is managing partner/editor of AboutThatCar.com and AboutThatCar.blogspot.com.

Lexus LS 600h L for hybrid luxury

Written by Frank S. Washington, NNPA Columnist, AboutThatCar.com
Tuesday, 13 January 2009 01:58
