



Lexus LC500



LEXUS LC500 AND LS500

written by David M. Brown

Visitors to the recent 2019 Chicago Auto Show enjoyed the second iteration of the Lexus LC 500 Inspiration Series, a limited edition of the luxury carmaker's flagship coupe.

With 100 cars offered, starting in April, the Inspiration features Flare Yellow paint, 21-inch wheels and tires, carbon fiber roof, numbered lower grille inserts and a leather interior with model-defining yellow stitching.

The car carries the same 5.0-liter normally aspirated DOHC 32-valve V-8 of the LC500 series. The 471-horsepower/398 lb-ft-torque engine, through a slick 10-speed automatic transmission, delivers 0-to-60 mph runs of just 4.4 seconds, underlining its competitiveness in the luxury sports car niche. The MSRP is \$106,210.

This highest level Lexus series also includes the LS500 and the LC500h Hybrid models. All three versions are rear wheel driven on the company's GA-L platform, with the engine mounted front mid ship, providing excellent weight balance.

The LS500 is equipped with a strong, responsive 3.5-liter, twin turbo DOHC 24-valve V-6, also paired with the 10-speed automatic on the LC. The injection systems and valvetrains are similar for the LS and the LC, but the latter incorporates a few turbo-charging edits such as a more compact actuator to adjust the intake valves, explains Ed Hellwig, with Lexus Product Communications. The LS500 sedan is not quite as quick as the two-door LC, but you'll still handle most of life's road challenges very capably with its 4.7-second 0-60 times.

For drivers wanting luxury, performance and economy, the 354-horsepower LC500h carries the 3.5-liter, 24-valve Atkinson-cycle V-6 coupled with dual electric motors and a lightweight lithium-ion battery. The Hybrid sprints from start to 60 in 4.7 seconds.

"Both the LC and the LS are designed to be engaging driver's cars with dynamic exterior designs, but the larger, sedan configuration of the LS makes it inherently more practical and, therefore, often attracts a slightly different buyer," says Ed Hellwig, with Lexus Product Communications. The LS500, for example, offers 23 combined MPG, based on EPA/DOT figures, compared with the LC500 at 19 combined MPG.

For sure, performance-minded drivers will be attracted to the LC500. For one, a combination of high-tensile steel, titanium, carbon fiber and aluminum combine to reduce weight. These materials and other components, such as lift- and -drag-reducing air intakes and rear aero ducts, ensure superior handling, stability even at higher speeds and everyday driving comfort.

This is also an attention-grabbing coupe, set off by a number of styling details such as flush-surface door handles with LEDs; these illuminate when the door is opened and darken 15 seconds after closing. The car, liveried in optional Infrared, elicited many positive comments and thumbs-up.

The LC500 V-8 provides consistent power through all rpms to redline as well as instant responsiveness for all conditions. And the magnesium paddle shifters add a clutchless driving



Lexus LS500



experience many will enjoy, although Lexus might consider placing these on the column independent of the steering wheel for better overall functionality. And, a supercharger option for this and the RCF, if Lexus engineers could find the engine-compartment space, would propel these cars up yet another notch.

The transmission is cat quick, with gear changes in 0.12 seconds, Lexus says, even better than the fine earlier eight-speed unit and certainly equal to the shifting abilities of even talented drivers. Even better: The company says that the smart system learns your habits, optimizing the gear based on speed and acceleration and what you've requested before in similar situations.

Both cars incorporate drive-enhancing suspension systems. The LC has an independent double-joint multilink with forged aluminum components, coil springs, linear-solenoid-actuated shock absorbers and adhesive-bonded stabilizer bar (front/rear) suspension.

The LS has Adaptive Variable Suspension: independent multilink with forged aluminum components and stabilizer bars (front/rear). Our LS also had the optional Air Suspension system, which replaces the standard coil springs with air springs. "These provide a smoother ride in addition to offering the ability to alter the ride height, such as lifting the car up to

make it easier to get in and out of," Hellwig explains.

Our LS also had rear wheel steering as part of the optional F SPORT performance package. "It's designed to improve the overall handling and responsiveness," Hellwig said.

This option also includes Variable Gear Ratio Steering (VGRS), which optimizes steering response at different speeds. "At lower speeds, the ratio changes so you can turn lock-to-lock with less movement to make it easier to maneuver in tight spaces. At higher speeds, the ratio is relaxed to offer more precise control and improved stability," Hellwig says. Our LC also had VGRS as part of its optional Performance Package.

The LC and LS share the same braking system: four-wheel power-assisted disc brakes with Electronic Controlled Braking (ECB); four-sensor, four-channel Anti-lock Braking System (ABS), Electronic Brakeforce Distribution (EBD) and Brake Assist. For additional stability, our LC had run-flat tires mounted on 21-inch forged alloy wheels, which seemed to further tighten our slalomlike turns and overall driving.

Of course, Lexus features such as the available Blind Spot Monitor with Rear Cross-Traffic Alert and entertainment options, including the Mark Levinson Audio System with 23 speakers and 900-plus watts, made our rides safer and sonically magnificent.

www.lexus.com