

Summer of lugs

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TEST DRIVE

Fresh Flagship

2018 Lexus LC 500h

DAN LYONS | text and photos
Special to the Times Union

A Grand Touring car should look, well, Grand. It's in the car's job description. By that standard, the new Lexus LC 500 checks all the right boxes. The coupe is sleek and low slung, (but not so subterranean that you can't get in and out). The sheet metal it's wrapped in is a blend of sharply creased panels and flaring fenders. Actually, it's a mix of metals, with aluminum (hood, front fenders, doors), and carbon fiber reinforced polymer (decklid). Even clad in silver — a color I find too conservative — the test car proved that there's no hiding the good looks of this Lexus.

The new front engine, rear-drive coupe is offered in two forms, separated by powertrain. Buyers choose from the LC 500 (5.0L V-8/10-speed automatic; \$92,000) or the LC 500h (3.5L V-6 and twin electric

2018 Lexus LC 500h
MSRP: \$96,510 · As Tested: \$101,560

motors/four-speed automatic and continuously variable transmissions: \$96,500). My driver was the latter. With six options and delivery charges, it had a sticker price of \$101,560.

Though I've driven only the hybrid, the two engine choices figure to make a big difference in the car's character. Not in sheer performance as much as soundtrack. To be sure, the V-8 version is the quicker of the two.



GRAND TOURING DONE RIGHT. The 2018 Lexus LC 500h offers a sleek, low slung profile offers plenty of luxury amenities. The rear-wheel-drive coupe is available with two powertrain options, including a 3.5L V-6 hybrid (left).

The petrol powered LC 500 is rated at 471 horsepower and 398 lb.-ft. of torque, and I've seen a 0-60 mph time of 4.8 seconds posted, with a 13.2 second quarter mile time @ 110.2 mph.

The hybrid, by comparison, combines a 3.5L Atkinson-cycle V-6 engine with two electric motor/generators, for a combined system output of 354 horsepower. The same stopwatch recorded the hybrid's trip to sixty from a standstill in 5.3 seconds, turning the quarter in 14.0 seconds @ 101.3 mph.

In manual mode, the two gear sets work in concert to give the driver the effect of ten gears when shifted through the steering wheel paddles. As the numbers indicate, it's respectably fast, though not class leading. And the hybrid powertrain achieves this with a level of quietude that's consistent

with Lexus' luxury vibe.

Acceleration in the V-8 version, is, by all accounts, a sonically dissimilar experience. The hybrid is mostly silent, or nearly so, in all driving situations. The V-8 is more boisterous; its rumble is never far from the surface. I enjoy the element that sound adds to speed. So, were it my wallet, I'd go with the V-8, and pocket the price difference against future fuel costs. But, my preference is probably atypical of most luxury (and Lexus) buyers. Either way, the company has given buyers two very different choices for how their cars are propelled, and how they sound doing so.

A large part of a hybrid engine's reason for being is increased efficiency and decreased fuel use. The LC

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Sharply-drawn styling and a cozy, classy cabin makes a high flying flagship for the luxury line.

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