

by Dan Lyons • *Special to The Daily Gazette*

## 2023 Lexus UX 250h F Sport

**MSRP: \$36,490 (UX 250h FWD) As Tested: \$47,690 (UX 250h F Sport Handling AWD)**



The entry level car in Lexus' luxury lineup is the UX 250h. The subcompact crossover is offered in FWD or AWD versions, in each of its four trim levels: UX 250h, UX 250h Premium, UX 250h F Sport Design and UX 250h F Sport Handling. This week's test drive is a top trim, F Sport Handling. With AWD and a fistful of stand alone options, it had an as tested price of \$ 47,690.

Lexus has made the hybrid the sole power plant in UX 250h this year. Therefore, all trim levels get the combination of a 2.0L four cylinder gas engine and a pair of two, electric motor-generators. AWD-equipped models also have an electric induction motor on the rear wheels. Total system horsepower is 181 @6,000 rpm. Zero to sixty times are in the 8.4-8.6 second range (FWD/AWD), so the UX 250h arguably isn't as fast as it looks. However, it feels brisk from a standstill, thanks to the electric assist, and it's fast enough as the revs climb for on-ramp merges and highway sailing. Driving modes include Eco, Normal, Sport and (on F Sport Handling) Sport S+ and Custom drive modes. Invoking the Sport modes on F Sport Handling sharpens throttle response and steering feel, and also adds (optionally) some synthetic engine sounds. The UX has good ride quality for a small vehicle, and has respectably sporty handling, which is enhanced by its tidy dimensions. It is also impressively stingy with a gallon of gas. EPA estimates are 43/41/42 (FWD), 41/38/29 (AWD), and I logged 39 mpg's during my test.

The front cabin is cozy, good looking and nicely appointed. Sliding inside, we note



*Photos courtesy of the manufacturer*

that the former touchpad interface has been shelved in favor of more conventional controls, and the display screens (8" or 12.3") are now touchscreens – both changes, addition by subtraction. A physical knob (as opposed to a virtual knob) operates on/off/volume for the sound system. The system is compatible with Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, and the connection is wireless. The dash beltline array of HVAC switchgear is in easy reach and easy to operate. The available, crisp-looking, head-up display (\$900) can be programmed to include a variety of useful information, including navigational directions. Blind spot monitoring and cross traffic alert are standard on all trim levels, as are Lexus' suite of driver assistance features: Pre-Collision with Pedestrian Detection, Low-light Pedestrian & Daytime Bicyclist Detection, Left Turn Vehicle Intersection Support, Lane Departure Alert with Steering Assist, Intelligent High Beams, Dynamic Radar Cruise Control, Lane Tracing Assist and Road Sign Assist.

Tall people will fit comfortably up front, but not also in back – not surprising, in a subcompact class vehicle. Likewise, cargo capacity is 17 cu.-ft. Rear seatbacks split and fold forward, but the resulting load floor is split level. And if you approach the rear hatch with your arms full, you can gain entry with a swing of your leg – provided that you have the optional, power rear door with kick sensor (\$550).

Though billed as a subcompact crossover, the UX 250h is more accurately seen as a luxury leaning hatchback, with a sporty flair. It is especially well suited to urban environs, where agility is always a virtue. And, its small footprint allows it to fit in parking spaces that larger vehicles wouldn't even slow down to consider.

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