

by Dan Lyons • *Special to The Daily Gazette*

2024 Lexus NX 350h

MSRP: \$44,365 (350h AED) As Tested: \$58,075 (Luxury)



This week's test drive car is the Lexus NX 350h. Two years removed from a full makeover, the NX returns for 2024 largely unchanged from last year's edition. It's offered with four, available powertrain options, including a plug-in hybrid and hybrid versions, the latter of which I drove for this review. Outfitted with the Luxury trim package, my NX had a sticker price of \$58,075.

The small, luxury SUV has a stylish interior. My Lexus tester was outfitted with both the Premium package (highlights: heated, front seats with memory, power moonroof, tilt/tele steering column, parking assist) and the Luxury package (includes leather trim interior, head-up display, 14-inch center touchscreen, black, open pore wood trim, adaptive front, LED lighting). The big touchscreen dominates the dashboard. The display is bright and in easy reach of the driver, though the home layout is busy with virtual buttons, which slows the process of finding/making system adjustments. One seasonal gripe: the screen buttons don't accept input from a winter-gloved hand. Front seating is comfortable and adjustable to fit all forms. And, the leather trimmed upholstery levels up the cabin's luxe factor. The shifter on the 350h is small, and requires finesse moves to operate. I found that a quick, doublecheck was often required to make sure I was in the right gear. Door handles (inside and out) are electronic, rather than mechanical: a different sound and feel that the driver grows accustomed to. Even in Luxury trim, the option sheet beckons with extras. Among my favorites were the panoramic moon roof (\$500), and a bird's-eye view monitor (coupled with lane change assist and front, cross traffic alert (\$1,070). A digital rearview mirror (\$200) toggles between analog



Photos are courtesy of the manufacturer.



and digital modes, to give the driver a wider rear view, that removes obstructions. The cold area package bundles a strong, adjustable steering wheel heater, wiper/window deicer and a fast response heater (\$250) – niceties, in cold weather climes like ours.

Rear seat room in the NX hybrid accommodates a pair of six footers, with same size up front. Cargo capacity ranges from 22.7 – 46.9 cubic feet, depending on how the seats are deployed. The seatbacks fold nearly flat (power folding and seat heat can be added to row two for \$1,030). Liftover height in back for loading is comfortably low.

Power for the NX 350h is provided by a fuel injected, 2.5L four cylinder gas engine, coupled with a pair of electric drive motor-generators. The combined, system output is 240 horsepower. The company quotes a 0-60 time of 7.2 seconds, and in practice, the 350h has sufficient power for all of your driving needs. Passing or ramp merging present no problems. The hybrid is also respectably frugal with a gallon of gas. The EPA estimates fuel economy at 41/37/39, and I logged 32 mpg's during my test drive.

Overall, the NX 350h delivers a quiet, congenial environment. While it corners confidently, the 350h prioritizes comfort over sport, and offers a suitably smooth ride. All 350h's are AWD; one of the electric motors is assigned to drive the rear wheels. Hence, winter driving conditions will do nothing to disrupt the cabin's relaxing vibe.