# Latest Lexus CT200H Hybrid – Road Test

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Lexus CT200H petrol/electric hybrid for 2018.

## Test-driven by David Miles (Miles Better News Agency).

The Lexus CT200h is not exactly new, it's in its sixth year of production but for a final throw of the dice it has some useful styling and equipment updates for the 2018 model year.

The CT200h is the steppingstone model into the premium Lexus brand which celebrates its 30th anniversary next year of being introduced by Toyota. The CT200 range was a big move to providing a range of premium quality family sized hatchbacks into the all important company car market, with its low CO2 emissions leading to relatively low Benefit-in-Kind tax

costs and with sports styling that would appeal to younger buyers.

It also offered retail customers a user-friendly intro model to the Lexus premium brand and to provide an alternative, more youthful option to the Toyota Prius which shares the same 1.8-litre petrol/electric hybrid drivetrain with a CVT auto transmission.

With no petrol only or diesel power sources, all versions of 2018 CT 200h are petrol/electric hybrids and prices range through SE, Luxury, F Sport and Premier core spec levels from £23,495 to £30,495. As always there are a number of options and option packs available to personalise the model chosen.

Although not short of premium brand competitors such as the Audi A3, BMW 1 Series and Mercedes A-Class, as well as top spec non premium models such as the VW Golf, Ford Focus and Vauxhall Astra, the CT200h has served the Lexus brand well with over 30,000 UK sales, one third of the total sold across Europe.

Refreshed and revitalised is how Lexus describes the latest CT200h. It has a stronger exterior look including a cleaner, more prominent arrangement of the signature Lexus spindle grille and front bumper and repositioning of the arrowhead daytime running lights above new single-projector LED headlamp units. Changes have also been to the rear of the vehicle with a new garnish and treatment of the lower rear bumper section, and new 16 and 17-inch wheel designs have been introduced.




Interior changes include further upgrading of the mix of interior trims ranging from textures of the vinyl through to leather trim and upholstery and all impressing in the quality of fit and finish. The multimedia system central display screen has been enlarged to 10.3-inches for the Lexus Premium Navigation system for clearer presentation and supposedly greater ease of use. But its operation is still via a computer mouse type controller positioned in the console between the front seats. But it is incredibly sensitive, not easy to use on the move and not very accurate. This fault is not new – it’s been like this in most Lexus models for

years. I guess if customers are happy with its operation who are we ‘motoring scribes’ to complain? Good to see though that at least the heating and ventilation system has its own controls which are not part of the display screen/controller system.

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Another important addition to the updated Lexus CT200h is the availability of the Lexus Safety System+ which is standard on all UK grades above SE. It offers enhanced safety with now commonplace technologies such as a Pre-Collision System, Adaptive Cruise Control, Lane Keeping Assist Alert with Sway Warning, Automatic High Beam Headlights and Road Sign Assist. This technology is not ahead of its time, it’s just caught up with the competition and helps with its insurance group and Euro NCAP safety ratings.

The CT200h uses the second-generation petrol-electric self-charging hybrid system. It combines a 98 bhp petrol engine with an 81 bhp electric motor, giving a combined output of 134 bhp with maximum torque of 142 Nm (105 lb.ft) from the engine from 2,800 rpm and 207 Nm (153 lb.ft) from the electric motor from its first revolution. With drive to the front wheels through a CVT auto gearbox the hybrid’s powertrain operates in Normal mode and three on-demand modes of EV (electric only for very short distances), Eco and Sport. The electric motor is always operating, allowing the engine to stop and start at any vehicle speed depending on a variety of conditions, load, speed and so on. It starts off automatically in electric power and the petrol engine normally springs into life quite quickly. The battery is charged automatically either during braking or on the overrun so electric power is on hand through perpetual motion. There is no plug-in CT200h model for this generation but expect future versions to be offered with petrol/electric hybrid or plug-in hybrid and all electric power sources.




Most of my driving on open and commuter journey roads was in Eco mode where it was quiet and responsive enough, but Sport mode operation provided more of an on-off switch for acceleration. Generally at lower in-town speeds the engine was quiet and refined, on more open roads at 50 mph it remained responsive but at 60-70 mph cruising speeds the engine became noisy, especially during brisk acceleration. Being potentially a business person's car where high mileages are covered the car provides the low CO2 emissions for low taxation but not really the performance needed for effortless long journeys. The CT200h is far happier as a commuter vehicle where low in-town speeds are covered with ease, as are more open roads where 50 mph is the norm.

Top speed is a modest 112 mph and the acceleration time from zero to 62 mph takes 10.3 seconds, not bad but noisy. The official Combined Cycle fuel consumption figure is 68.9 mpg

but my test drive figures were well below that and not due to my heavy right foot. Overall the figure for the week was 50.5 mpg but a longer 70 mph motorway cruise saw it at a steady 47.8 mpg before climbing back to 50 mpg plus for commuter travel. The official CO2 figure of 94 g/km of course is the major selling point. It means that VED First Year road tax is £125 followed by the £140 Standard rate. Before the April increases this year it was £0 cost. Company car drivers will pay 19% Benefit-in-Kind tax, before it was 17%. Insurance is Group 21E.

## VERDICT

Whilst good looking with its new sportier styling, with a well proportioned interior and beautifully put together, one major criticism was the ride comfort. Brittle, hard and non-compliant, all apply at some times depending on the surface and travelling speed. The ride is just too firm most of the time and there is a fair amount of road noise intrusion over courser tarmac surfaces. The CT200h is a good looking, well equipped five door hatchback in many ways but not in its ride comfort and there is the element of driving pleasure missing as well.

For: Low cost company car tax, well equipped, good fuel economy potential for in-town driving, well made, practical interior space.

Against: Very hard and non-compliant ride comfort, high road noise intrusion, noisy acceleration, more functional than fun to drive, overall fuel economy was well below the official figure, fiddly and erratic display screen controller, ungenerous warranty.




## Milestones and Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

## Lexus CT200h Luxury with Leather Pack.

Price: £25,995.

Engine/transmission: Hybrid 1.8, four cylinder 98 bhp petrol engine with 81 bhp electric motor, CVT auto transmission with EV, Eco, Normal and Sport driving modes.

Performance: 112 mph, 0-62 mph 10.3 seconds.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 68.9 mpg (50.5 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 94 g/km, VED First Year road tax £125 then £140 Standard rate, BiK company car tax 19%.

Insurance Group: 21E.

Warranty: Three years/60,000 miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,350 mm (14.27 ft) W 1,765 mm (5.79 ft), boot/load space 375 to 985 litres (13.24 to 34.78 cu.ft) , five doors/five seats.