Lexus ES350e – Road Test

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Robin Roberts (WheelsWithinWales) writes… Maturity comes respect and in the age of electric cars, the Lexus ES has earned a place at the head of the queue.

The new, eighth generation luxury saloon in 37 years has eschewed the trend towards SUVs and simply, but classically, redefined what many may consider a modern executive saloon.

From the side it looks like a four-door coupe but is in fact a saloon with a big boot, and what deceives the eye also pleases it.

Launched three decades ago as a petrol model, the 2018 7th generation indicated the way the marque was going when it came as a full hybrid.

Today's ES is exclusively electric only and delivers the refinement and performance it has engineered over the years to compete against newcomers who used it as a benchmark for their new age automobiles.

It was launched this year in Premium, Premium Plus and Takumi grades on a choice of 19 or 21-inch wheels for the ten models on sale.

Prices rise from £59,345 to £72,545 and the few accessories available comprise protect and cosmetic packs and an A/C three-pin plug and six metre cable at £259.

It is a larger car than previous derivatives and is very sleek with minimalist styling inside to let eyes roll over the fascia, console and controls.

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Everything is actually clearly if subtly marked with discreet lighting and idents and came immediately to the driver's eyes and fingers on the wheelspokes, column stalks, fascia and infotainment screen, which is 14-inches across.

The touch controls all worked silently and immediately.

The support for the driver is a small display infront of the face for selectable information with a head-up display projected onto the screen. The centrally placed infotainment display is big and therefore easy to see and even alter on the move, unlike some rivals.

There are lot of places to put on journey oddments infront or for the use of back seat

passengers and the car's sophisticated climate control was highly effective and near silent in operation. There's a good temperature range, voluminous output and wide distribution controls as well as powered windows and sunroof.

The wide, deeply padded and long supporting seats are the latest from Lexus and truly comfortable, doing a good job of soaking up the bumps which evaded the car's suspension.

A few passengers commented on the front and rear legroom inside, the ease of getting in and out as well as the bootspace for items, so long as they did not need height clearance to slip into the low, wide and long boot. A few highlighted the illuminated door skins.

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At the other end, the motor and driveline were highly refined, accelerating the car from rest to its fast cruising speed without any sign or feeling of strain.

It was brisk in urban areas, easily maintained good progress in countryside and settled down to a strong motorway pace as well. We had various indications of range but our best of 350 miles was achieved with little effort on the part of the driver.

Annoyingly, you have to buy a Lexus three-pin plug and six-metre cable to charge from an A/C point if you cannot use the Type2 standard connection and in a car of this price that seemed penny-pinching.

It is a big car and its 2.2 tonnes kerbweight felt noticeable when pressing on.

There was little feeling of agility coming through the controls although it responded well to steering, brakes and throttle and it always felt safe, just a bit underwhelming.

The front wheel drive transmission pulled it around corners with confidence and without drama but I was left thinking perhaps it could be more exciting, capable and rewarding if it was given rear wheel drive as well. The range's standard powertrain is good, but it might be

better.

Lexus has piled the latest infotainment, driving and safety technology into the new ES and it is easy to use, works well and really has good quality to the Mark Levinson sound system. The safety systems sit there in the background and never became intrusive unless they sensed they were needed, so you could set a motorway speed, relax and enjoy a journey, with warnings for traffic speed advisories etc. coming into play as appropriate.

VERDICT

The Lexus ES350e is refined and easy going with calm composure for looking out at a frantic world whizzing by.

For: Roomy, good seats, stylish, sophisticated, refined, good handling, long range & performance.

Against: Noisy sometimes jiggly ride, big turning circle when parking, only front wheel drive.

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FAST FACTS

Lexus ES350e Premium

Price: £68,245	Mechanical: 221 hp motor, 72kWh battery, front wheel drive
Max Speed: 99 mph	0-62mph: 8.0 secs
Range: 350 miles	Insurance Group: 44E

C02 emissions: Zero	Bik rating: 4%, £200FR, £640SRx5
	Size: L5.15 m (16.90 ft), W 1.92 m (6.30 ft), H 1.56 m (5.19 ft), Bootspace 454 litres (16.03 cu.ft)
	Kerbweight: 2, 245 kg (4,949 lb)
	Warranty: 3 years to 10 years/ 100,000 miles

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