



Lexus RZ450e – Road Test

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Robin Roberts (and WheelsWithinWales) writes: “Lexus has just raised the game in the fierce fight for buyers looking at ‘zero-emission’ pure battery cars”.

Enter the Lexus RZ450e series of nine models from £55,595 to £66,695 in Urban, Premium, Premium Plus and Takumi guises, with choices of 18 or 20 inch wheels and single or bi-tone paint finishes.



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The 450e has the latest electronic axles effectively providing four-wheel-drive while the newer two-wheel-drive RZ300e series costs between £49,995 and £61,095, but shares the same trim specifications.

The RZ450e has a 150kW front e-axle motor and 80kW motor on the rear e-axle which on-board computer controls to ensure the optimum grip in any conditions and responds to the driver's input on throttle, brakes and steering.





To maximise the powertrain there are four selectable drive modes, normal, eco, sport and Range, the last ensures battery power and systems are optimised to stretch out the charge as far as possible. The other modes are biased to bring out what a driver prefers at a particular time with the rear motor first engaged and adding the front motor if required.

Paddles on the column give four levels of deceleration from mild in eco to mighty in sport, and a driver can fine tune these as well to taste.

For all its state of art powertrain permutations, the RZ450e suspension is fairly conventional with front MacPherson struts and rear double wishbones with trailing arms fitted, with self-sensing shock absorbers to vary responses on particular surfaces.

The electric steering gave a lot of feedback and the turning circle was good in town without being twitchy on open roads, the brakes really were up to anything thrown at them and held the heavy car on a steep slope.

The low centre of gravity pulled down by the under-floor battery pack meant it cornered flat and fast with hardly any body roll or pitching under braking or acceleration.

Generally it was extremely comfortable but occasionally a really bad piece of road would be felt inside and the usually composed cabin would be roused by a rumble from the wheels and suspension.

Access was excellent for occupants and when using the boot with the power cables neatly housed in their own compartment beneath, which meant you might have to move luggage or bags if you wanted to charge at some points. Capacity was good, with 1,451 litres (51.24 cu.ft.) available.



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Visibility was excellent despite a high waistline with sensors front, back and to the sides ensuring a driver was always aware of surroundings and threats.

Intelligent lane control, speed warning and integrated cruise control made a long trip very easy even in busy traffic.

Very good self-dipping headlights were bright without dazzling oncoming vehicles, wash and wipers were highly effective. You felt very safe in the RZ450e.

The driver has a really wide sweeping instruments display with essential gauges in front and the infotainment and comfort controls alongside over the centre of the car's fascia. Everything was very simple, clear and quickly adjusted.

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Two big sunroofs added a spacious feel to the cabin and the air conditioning kept everything in check with fine settings for heads, bodies and feet throughout the interior.

Seat adjustment was excellent for those in front with plenty of wrap-around support and just a little less padding on the back split seats. Room was good throughout.



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With so much technology to touch and try it was interesting to vary the deceleration and try different drive modes, and this meant the test car's range went from an indicated 250 miles at the start of our test to finish up after two recharges with an indicated 210 miles over a mixture of motorway, main and secondary roads in light to moderate traffic and we think this is probably a fair indication of what you could expect. It comes with a rapid charging ability should you need it as well on a longer journey.

Considering expectations, it's worth mentioning that the Lexus battery pack is guaranteed to have 70% of charging capacity after ten years and possibly up to 90%, thanks to an enormous amount of experience in BEV technology.

VERDICT

The Lexus RZ450e is undoubtedly one of the best of the modern BEVs by way of performance, equipment and refinement, and its sophistication is a match for the dwindling luxury cars which still rely on petrol to power them. It certainly makes a strong case for the upper EV sector.

For: Very highly refined responses, sophisticated detailing, comfortable seats, roomy body, excellent handling and equipment, long warranty.

Against: Some road rumbles and occasionally bumpy ride, widely varying range displayed.



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FAST FACTS

Model: Lexus RZ450e Premium Plus bi-tone

Price: £62,195

Mechanical: 309 bhp twin motors, 71.4 kWh lithium ion battery, 4WD

Max Speed: 99 mph



0 - 62 mph: 5.3 secs

Range: 210 miles

Insurance Group: 44E

C02 emissions: Zero

Bik rating: 2%, £Zero FY, £590SRx5

Warranty: 10 years/ 100,000 miles

Size: L 4.81 m (15.78 ft), W 1.90 m (6.23 ft), H 1.64 m (5.38 ft)

Bootspace: 522 - 1,451 litres (18.43 to 51.24 cu.ft)

Kerbweight: 2,115 kg (4,663 lb)