New Lexus RC 2+2 Coupé Road Test

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Stunning Styling AND Rarity Value – says David Miles (Miles Better News Agency).

Originally designed as an RC concept coupé, such was the public and media reaction to it at

various international motor shows that Lexus has now built it. The first UK deliveries started in January this year, but hurry if you want one – there is a sales plan of only 825 units this year.

The RC 2+2 coupe rear wheel drive is available in 300h form with a full hybrid 2.5 litre petrol/electric motor with 220 bhp power output or a 2.0 litre turbocharged 200t petrol engine offering 241 bhp. There are no diesel engines in the Lexus range. The 300h has a CVT auto transmission and the sportier 200t an 8-speed automatic gearbox with manual mode.

The UK prices range from £34,995 for the RC 300h and £36,495 for the 200t.

There is also another niche variant in the range – the RC F with higher performance specification, powered by a Lexus 471 bhp, 5.0 litre, V8 petrol engine with automatic transmission and priced from £59,995 to £67,995.

But the core selling version is the popular 300h because of lower emissions and less swingeing tax costs. This is available with the choice of Luxury, F-Sport and Premier spec levels whilst the 200t is available in F-Sport and Premier trim. Strangely, Luxury grade is exclusive to the hybrid 300h and is the entry level to the range.

UK sales for the RC range this year are minimal in global terms with a target of only 825 units so rarity value should preserve long term values. Lexus GB expects the 300h hybrid to take 79% of sales, the 200t turbo petrol 9% and the 5.0-litre V8 RC F 12%.

Lexus GB sees the RC range being attractive to new and younger buyers to their premium brand. The competitor's models are the coupé versions of the Audi A5, BMW 4 Series and the Mercedes C-Class.

I know beauty is in the eye of the beholder, but I think most people will find the Lexus RC stunning in its design; perhaps it's not practical with its two-doors and 2+2 seating ,but its kerb-appeal is its main selling point. It certainly attracted the most public interest from any

new car I've tested this year.



The RC has the new generation Lexus design language, lots of angles, sharp creases, sculptured folds for the body panels, wide haunches and ground effect side skirts. Its statement front deep mesh grille leads up to a long bonnet, swept-back windscreen, a coupé mid section and a steeply raked rear window – which looks like a tailgate but instead it's a boot lid. The overall length is 4,695 mm (15.40 ft), width 1,840 mm (6.04 ft) and its sleek low height is just 1,395 mm (4.58 ft). At the rear is a boot with a 374 litre (13.21 cu.ft) capacity.

Classy Machine

I tested the RC 200t F-Sport version priced at £36,495, which has 19-inch alloy wheels, deeper front and rear bumpers and LED headlights to go with the LED daytime running lights and LED rear lights.

Inside the sports cabin it is classic high class Lexus, exquisitely styled with perfect quality and it feels solidly put together. The front interior has a cockpit layout with a sweeping fascia intersected by a recessed housing for the 7.0-inch multi-media/sat-nav screen. The lower centre console leading to the front seats houses the radio and ventilation controls, heated and cooled front seats, the gear shift lever, the driving mode select with Eco, Normal and Sport settings plus a fiddly PC type touchpad to control the information screen functions. The seats both front and rear are sports style with leather upholstery and leather trim is widely used throughout the cabin.



In the rear the legroom is minimal for adults and I suspect getting a youngster into a child seat would not be easy. The rear seats do fold to increase the boot space as well. Business executives, young couples without children and older empty-nesters would more easily live with the RC than a family.

The F-Sport specification also adds a sports steering wheel, aluminium pedals and scuff plates for the very long sills. The very wide opening doors did limit where you can park the RC coupe in areas of side-by-side parking.

Other items from the extensive list of equipment includes memory from seats, front/rear

parking sensors, rear view camera, auto lights and wipers, Bluetooth, dual zone air-con, cruise control, smart entry and push button start. The only interior option fitted to my test car was the upgraded Lexus Premium navigation system with remote touch controller and a10-speaker sound system with DAB radio and DVD player, which costs £1,995.

When it comes to the technical stuff, the 2.0 litre, four cylinder, DOHC variable valve timing petrol engine is boosted by a twin-scroll turbocharger to produce 241 bhp and maximum torque of a healthy 350 Nm (258.1 lb.ft) from just 1,650 rpm.

Drive to the rear wheels is through an eight-speed automatic gearbox with auto and manual gearchange modes plus paddle-shift levers on the steering column. Drivers can select Eco, Normal or Sport performance modes. The F-Sport spec version has an added Torsen limited slip differential and adaptive variable rate suspension for optimum handling. Other technical inclusions are vehicle stability control, traction control, lane departure warning, hill start assist and a temporary spare wheel.

As for performance; top speed is 143 mph and zero to 62 mph takes 7.5 seconds.

Officially the Combined Cycle fuel consumption is 38.7 mpg and for my week long test driving sessions covering the usual motorway, winding country A/B roads and some in-town stop/start travel, the real-life figure was 32.8 mpg. I have to admit much of the driving was done in Eco mode only because the amount of road traffic didn’t really allow for anything else. The good thing was that the Eco mode didn’t detract from the driving pleasure – unless you want to be racy. The Sport mode, when I was able to use it, sharpened up the throttle and gearchange responses and firmed up the ride – but not to a temperamental level. With CO2 emissions at a relatively high 168 g/km VED road tax costs £300 and then £210 for the second year. Company car drivers pay a hefty 30% Benefit-in-Kind tax.

By comparison the best selling 300h hybrid models will officially return over 56 mpg, they have CO2 emissions of 113 to 116 g/km, VED tax is £0/£30 and BIK tax is 19 or 20%, depending on the specification. You can see why the 300h hybrid models are more popular

and apart from the Premier highest spec, cheaper to buy and run as well. But they are slower!



Despite its higher speed potential no matter what setting was used the RC 200t is more of a ‘cruiser than a bruiser’. Its size and weight reduces the coupé’s agility, it feels a solid but heavy car so loses out on some of the sharpness of its lighter-weight competitors. The lazy kick-down on the auto box didn’t help and manual change mode was not as fast as some sports transmissions in this sector.

The performance will only disappoint if the owner/user wants an out-and-out sports car.

Most users will find it smooth and quick enough when needed for refined everyday use. Long journeys are a ‘doddle’ with effortless cruising speeds and a boost of acceleration when needed. A big plus is that despite its sporting nature and large wheels it gives a comfortable ride an all but the roughest of UK roads.

VERDICT

The Lexus RC 200t is not a cut-and-thrust hard-core sports machine, it is a classy sports coupé with huge amounts of stunning visual kerb-appeal. Its performance might not be the sharpest but it will sell on its quality and genuinely striking styling.

For: Stunning exterior sports coupe styling, huge kerb-appeal, beautifully crafted high quality interior, comprehensive specification, comfortable ride, smooth high torque petrol engine, realistically good fuel consumption.

Against: Loses out on handling agility and real sports car pace due to its heavy weight, slow gearchanges, high tax costs, more expensive to buy and run than most of the petrol/electric hybrid versions.



MILESTONES AND WHEELS-ALIVE TECH. SPEC. IN BRIEF:

Lexus RC 200t F-Sport 2+2 Coupé.

Engine: 2.0 litre, four cylinder DOHC turbocharged petrol.

Transmission: 8-speed auto gearbox with manual mode, rear wheel drive with Torsen limited slip differential.

Power: 241 bhp.

Torque: 350 Nm (lb.ft) from 1,650 rpm.

Performance:

0-62 mph: 7.5 seconds.

Top speed; 143 mph.

Fuel consumption: Combined Cycle 38.7 mpg (32.8 mpg on test), CO2 168g/km, VED road tax £300 First Year rate then £210 thereafter, BIK company car tax 30%.

Insurance Group: 40E.

Warranty: 3 years/60,000 miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 4,695 mm (15.40 ft), W 1,840 mm (6.04 ft), H 1,395 mm (4.58 ft). boot 374 litres (13.21 cu.ft), two doors, 2+2 seating.

Price: £36,495.