

# Luxury Liner with a Sporty Spirit

by Joe Sage

The specifications and build on this car pretty much equal the experience with it. This is not always the case with some brands, in which an optioned-up and derivately-named model is no match for the full performance lineup. But we have long since come to appreciate that a Lexus F Sport is a true performance model, not just a trim level—in this case perhaps short of the V8 LS F model would likely have (if it existed, which it doesn't as of now), but with plenty of performance from its twin-turbo six, while offering relative light weight, nice front/rear balance and notable fuel economy. All of the above really comes into play when you add an \$9700 F Sport Performance Package, as on our sample. It remains a puzzle why this is not part of an F Sport, period, but by means of comparison (since there is no LS F), the rear-drive GS sedan (a model offering both an F and an F Sport) runs \$46,710 for a base GS 300, \$51,300 for a GS 300 F Sport, and \$84,450 for a full GS F. It's clear there is plenty of headroom to option up to full F Sport performance short of full F model price.

The LS 500 F Sport's go power is the same as on a regular LS 500 (already a powerful beast), but its stopping power is upped dramatically (and appropriately for its upsized and staggered wheels), moving from four-piston to six-piston calipers front and rear on notably larger discs all around. The F Sport Performance Package adds significantly more—rapid-change performance air suspension, active rear steering and active stabilizer, in addition to

## SPECIFICATIONS

<b>ENGINE</b>	3.5L DOHC 24v twin turbo V6, alum block/heads, VVT-iE intelligent elec intake, VVT-i intelligent exhaust
<b>DRIVETRAIN</b>	RWD (AWD avail)
<b>HP/TORQUE</b>	416 hp / 442 lb-ft
<b>COMPRESSION RATIO</b>	10.476:1
<b>TRANSMISSION</b>	10-spd automatic
<b>0-TO-60 / TOP SPEED</b>	4.6 sec (RWD) / 136 mph
<b>SUSPENSION</b>	<b>F:</b> hi-mount multi-link; <b>R:</b> multi-link
<b>STEERING</b>	veh speed-sense rack & pinion, elec pwr assist
<b>BRAKES</b>	<b>F:</b> 15.7" vented, 6-piston opp alum calipers; <b>R:</b> 14.1" vented, 4-piston opp alum calipers, 4-channel 4-sensor ABS w veh dynamics integr mgmt
<b>WHEELS</b>	20" split 5-spoke alloys w dark graphite
<b>TIRES</b>	<b>F:</b> 245/45RF20, <b>R:</b> 275/40RF20 (Bridgestone, Dunlop, Michelin)
<b>LENGTH / WHEELBASE</b>	206.1 / 123.0 in
<b>TURNING CIRCLE</b>	veh speed-sense (RWD) 37.4 ft
<b>GROUND CLEARANCE</b>	(RWD, air susp) 5.7 in
<b>SEATING CAPACITY</b>	five
<b>HEADROOM (F/R)</b>	(with panorama roof) 36.8 / 36.4 in
<b>LEGROOM (F/R)</b>	41.04 / 38.9 in
<b>CARGO CAPACITY</b>	16.951 cu.ft
<b>WEIGHT</b>	(RWD, air susp) 4751 lb
<b>WEIGHT DISTRIBUTION (F/R)</b>	53 / 47%
<b>FUEL / CAPACITY</b>	91 octane prem / 21.7 gal
<b>MPG</b>	19/30/23 (city/hwy/comb)

everything from a sexier grille and fascia, to performance wheels, sporty aluminum pedals and trim, embossed headrests and other details.

One thing we might add to our sample would be available all-wheel drive, but only because we like it in general, not because it needs it—its ground-hugging suspension and advanced handling technologies take care of that. The AWD build adds \$3,220 and about 200 pounds (varying by suspension options), but also knocks a point or two off

## PRICE AS TESTED

<b>BASE PRICE</b>	<b>\$81,200</b>
<b>F SPORT PERFORMANCE PACKAGE:</b> F Sport exterior front bumper, mesh grille inserts, rear diffuser; F Sport interior lower door trim, perforated leather, steering wheel, shift knob, 28-way pwr front seats w embossed headrests, ultrasuede headliner, alum pedals & trim, variable ratio steering, active rear steering, active stabilizer	9700
<b>F SPORT HEATED LEATHER STEERING WHEEL</b>	nc
<b>20" WHEELS:</b> split 5-spoke alloy w dark graphite	nc
<b>LEXUS SAFETY SYSTEM+:</b> pre-collision w active braking, active steering assist, pedestrian alert, front cross traffic alert, lane change assist	3000
<b>AIR SUSPENSION:</b> adaptive variable w rapid height	1500
<b>24" HEADS-UP DISPLAY</b>	1220
<b>LED HEADLAMPS</b> w adaptive front lighting system	300
<b>MARK LEVINSON AUDIO</b> w 23 speakers	1940
<b>PANORAMA GLASS ROOF</b>	1000
<b>PANORAMIC VIEW MONITOR</b>	800
<b>DESTINATION CHARGE</b>	1025
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$101,685</b>

fuel mileage and adds two feet to the turning circle. Hmm. We might not add if after all, unless we had specific weather or track conditions in mind.

As with all current Lexus models, the touchpad is still unnecessarily touchy. They've been improving it incrementally, but we'd love one major redesign.

Overall, the manumatic shift is much smarter than average. For a quick freeway lane change, it would hold our designated gear long enough to get into a new lane, then come out of it quickly on its own, as well it should—though if we downshift to hold our place in a lower gear in slower traffic, it pops out within a matter of seconds.

If you can ignore a few points of overly intrusive technology, it's a fine performance sedan. ■

