

Eye-opener BY JOE SAGE

Relating any given Lexus or Toyota to its corporate cousin is easy on some, trickier on others (there are more Toyota cars and SUVs, both). The sedans are straightforward—IS to Corolla, ES to Camry, LS to Avalon (okay, IS-Corolla can still surprise many). With utilities, though, not so much.

Toyota's ten SUVs and crossovers (or seven when you reduce to root models) cover a wide range, in many cases distinguished by size or powertrain, but also by other attributes. Some have dead serious off-road capabilities, and among these, several builds of the Toyota 4Runner stand out.

Lexus has nine utilities (or just five root models), which is where the correlations can confound. But styling is what really throws you. The Lexus GX, at a glance, may seem like a bit smaller (and more affordable) alternative to the big LX, thus perhaps like Highlander to Toyota's Sequoia. But no, it's the coupe-profiled RX that aligns with Highlander. Due to styling, GX's pairing is perhaps more surprising.

We had the totally trail-tough Toyota 4Runner TRD Pro a few months ago. When the Lexus GX was scheduled for a week, particularly this Black Line Special Edition, it sounded like a nightclub-at-midnight model. But as we spent a week with it—and started to tune in to its larger, tougher sidewalls, serious approach-departure-breakover specs, overall stance, and even part-style-part-function details like its roof rack—it became clear that this Lexus is indeed a 4Runner cousin in a luxury suit, and one of the off-roadier 4Runners, at that.

The relativity became even clearer as we also drove the more pavement-oriented 4Runner TRD Sport (also in this issue) the week after this GX.

A buyer's migratory path to a final choice can head in many directions, often as a study in relativity. While the less-off-roadier 4Runner TRD Sport might appeal to someone wanting the look and feel of a 4Runner, but with some personality from the more townish models (say Highlander), another path could be from the more-off-roadier 4Runners toward something more townish, also more premium-finished, a tad more powerful (though not as

much so as its V8 might suggest) and a tad pricier—but with the off-roadiness largely intact. That would be this one—the Lexus GX 460.

Though not as hands-on simple as the 4Runner, the controls and interfaces in the GX continue to improve. As Lexus takes years to ease away from the wiggly joystick of yore, the often jumpy console touchpad replacing it is now easy to avoid via screen and other controls. While not the biggest SUV from Lexus, the GX is quite spacious (in fact, though we're tall, the pedals were notably distant). Mirrors can dip when in reverse, selectively by left or right, but you had best know your future needs, as these positions need to be preset.

Variety can make decisions equal parts harder and easier, and Lexus offers considerable variety. Easy or hard, having choices is always better. Add in corporate cousin Toyota, and the choices Lexus provides offer even more variety, better still. A luxury off-roader is going to check off a lot of boxes for a great many Arizona buyers. Now you may just have to ask yourself whether you'd risk rock chips and cactus scratches on this beauty. ■



SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY	Tahara, Aichi, Japan
BUILD	steel body on steel perimeter frame
ROWS / SEATS	three / seven
ENGINE	4.6L V8, cast alum/alum 32v
COMPRESSION RATIO	10.2:1
HP/TORQUE	301 hp / 329 lb-ft
TRANSMISSION	6-spd sequential shift ECT auto
DRIVETRAIN	full-time 4WD
ZERO-TO-60 / TOP SPEED	7.8 sec / 110 mph
SUSPENSION	F: dbl wishbone, coils, stblzr bar; R: 4-link rigid axle, coils, stblzr bar
STEERING	engine speed-sensing pwr asst rack & pinion w variable gear ratio
BRAKES	F: 13.3-in vented; R: 12.3-in solid
WHEELS	18x7.5-in alum alloy
TIRES	265/60R18 M/S (full size alloy spare)
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	192.1 / 109.8 in
TURNING CIRCLE	41.4 ft
HEADROOM (F/2/3)	38.0 / 40.2-40.4 / 35.2 in
LEGROOM (F/2/3)	41.7 / 34.1 / 29.3 in
CARGO CAPACITY	max 64.7 cu.ft
GROUND CLEARANCE	8.1 in
APPRCH / DEPART / BRKOVER	.21 / 23 / 21°
WEIGHT / GVWR	base 5130 / 6600 lb
TOW CAPACITY	6500 lb
FUEL / CAPACITY	.91 oct prem unl / 23.0 gal
MPG	15/19/16 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE	\$55,425
BLACK LINE SPECIAL EDITION: 18" split-six-spoke alloys w gloss black finish, open-pore black trim, black NuLuxe w grey bolster inserts and grey stitching, black window trim, black roof rails, scarlet taillamps	3835
BLACKLINE CROSS BARS	405
HEADLAMP WASHERS	100
GLASS BREAKAGE SENSOR	335
EXHAUST TIP	130
DESTINATION CHARGE	1075
TOTAL	\$61,305

2022 LEXUS GX 460 LINEUP

(base)	\$56,970
Luxury	66,480
Black Line Special Edition	▼ 60,480

Note: our sticker's base varied slightly from this.

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