

Delivering high performance via reasonable all-around balance, Lexus has moved past the eye-popping numbers of many EVs. Lexus RZ is offered with three powertrains—165, 230 or 300 hp, the lowest with FWD, the others with AWD, with zero-to-60 times from 7.1 to 4.9 to 4.1 seconds and recharging range running from 229 to 301 miles.

Lexus is going a long way in correcting or redirecting key perceptions of EVs. Early visions had centered on small cars—grocery runners or train station shuttles. Somewhere in the madness, too many pushed toward 1,000 hp, 8,000 lb, \$120,000—or even more on all counts.

Our sample, the 2026 Lexus RZ 500e F SPORT AWD, is the top spec version in an overall six-trim lineup—the most powerful and quickest, but with the shortest range. Even this top spot is also quite

attainable, with the full price range spanning just about \$10 grand, and the entire lineup running between upper \$40s and upper \$50s—stellar performance at about half the price of ludicrous specs with ultimately similar real world performance.

Lexus achieves all this by rebalancing the equation, starting with size and weight that make more power available for more than just toting its own battery around. Its tidy package combines excellent maneuverability and handling with a spacious and well equipped cabin and cargo area. It adds up to a winning formula of common sense and thrills.

All this sport also comes with utility. With almost eight inches of ground clearance, 24° departure and a more moderate 15° approach angle due to styling (an easy target for customizers?), the RZ is certainly adventure-ready and a likely candidate

for the rally circuit. And a just-over 36-foot turning circle makes it a champ in town.

As a dual-motor all-wheel-driver, ours has top power (402 hp system), noting on our first dive into a typically aggressive frontage road, holycow! Not only is this a rocket, it's an accurate rocket. All-wheel drive contributes, but its precision in holding a turn, with lack of torque steer, rates tops. As in any EV, 100 percent of torque is available immediately (a big factor in making ludicrous horsepower numbers borderline pointless, and the Lexus RZ is here to prove it).

Timing is everything, and as EV sales have recently plunged in the US, for a convergence of reasons political, financial and practical, along comes Lexus RZ to suggest that EVs will have a place carrying into the future, seizing an opportunity to see

where they can go on their own merits.

Toyota-Lexus is in an interesting position, having taken a cautious approach to the EV push. This seems well-deserved, as they had already led the world for decades in mastering alternative powertrains and clean internal combustion efficiency. They had little to gain by a sudden course change as the rest of the world leapt on command into the EV channel, and they had engineers worth keeping. Their more considered approach is now reaping benefits in line with actual market interest. And meanwhile, they've basically solved or improved a whole lot of what the bleeding edge developers and early adopters could have done better.

Lexus RZ brings size, weight and style far more in line with the original idea, and they've arrived there without the wasteful detour. They have also avoided the slippery lump look often used by others to telegraph presumed airflow friendliness. Toyota-Lexus has also long mastered incorporat-

ing aerodynamics into more dramatic style, having shown us for years how they can apply tiny effects to totally transform and control drag coefficients.

With all that in mind, this was one of the flat-out most enjoyable drive experiences we've had, regardless of its EV nature. It's fun to drive, easy to handle, powerful and quick. The Lexus RZ can easily please any EV enthusiast, while making any doubter find themselves saying, hey, this EV thing is pretty cool, I could buy one of these.

Of course it can handle duties in town. Can it handle a road trip? Our high-powered one is on the cusp for Flagstaff or Tucson round-trip from the Valley, though introduction of access to the Tesla Supercharger network should be a game-changer for recharging while there. Or maybe that's a vote to check out the lower model with more range (but less power and no AWD). We're definitely curious to see how that one feels, since this one has already been more than the sum of its numbers. ■

Everything but ludicrous

Power, style and utility at a real world price. BY JOE SAGE



SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY	Toyota, Aichi, Japan
SEATING	five
MOTORS	dual permanent magnet synchronous motors
TOTAL SYSTEM OUTPUT	300 kW / 402 hp
TORQUE	(F/R) 198.1 / 198.1 lb-ft
BATTERY	lithium-ion 76.96 kWh
ONBOARD CHARGER	NACS 11 kW
DRIVETRAIN	AWD
TRANSMISSION	1-spd automatic
ZERO-TO-60 / TOP SPEED	4.1 sec / 112 mph
SUSPENSION	F: MacPherson strut; R: dbl wishbone
STEERING	electric power steering
BRAKES	F: 12.9-in vented, dbl-piston caliper; R: 12.48-in vented, single-piston caliper
WHEELS	20-in alloy w aero covers
TIRES	F: 235/50R20 104V; R: 255/45R20 105V
	ours: Dunlop SP Sport Maxx
APPROACH / DEPARTURE	15.0 / 24.0°
GROUND CLEARANCE	7.87 in
TURNING CIRCLE	36.8 ft
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	189.17 / 112.2 in
HEADROOM (F/R)	39.88 / 39.69 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	42.11 / 37.52 in
CARGO CAPACITY	34.1 cu.ft
WEIGHT	4663 lb
RANGE	est 229 miles
MPGe	102/88/95 (city/hwy/comb)

BASE PRICE	\$57,000
BLUE BRAKE CALIPERS	500
COLD AREA PKG: headlight washers, windshield wiper de-icer	200
LUXURY PKG: digital key (req subscrip, trial incl), traffic jam assist (ditto), advanced park w remote park, digital rear mirror, Mark Levinson premium audio	2600
CARPET CARGO MAT	140
PANO ROOF SUN SHADE	200
WHEEL LOCKS	90
DESTINATION CHARGE	1295

TOTAL **\$62,034**
Per our Monroney; latest pricing below.

2026 LEXUS RZ LINEUP

	FWD	AWD
RZ 350e	\$47,295	na
" Premium	49,495	na
RZ 450e AWD	\$50,795	
" Premium AWD	52,995	
" Luxury AWD	58,295	
RZ 550e F SPORT AWD	58,295	

If there's one thing we would change, it's the operation of the electric doors, which have elements of uncertainty and potentially security.