

# Road beat: 2015 Lexus GS 350 – nearly perfect



The Lexus 350 continues to shine in the luxury class.  
Photos/Larry Weitzman

**By Larry Weitzman**

Lexus has the tagline “In the Pursuit of Perfection.” However, has the refined fourth generation hit the mark yet? In many ways it’s the perfect midsize car wheelbase of 112 inches and length of 190 inches while offering a perfect beam of 72 inches. The result is an interior of mammoth with rear seat leg room that makes transport of limousine proportions. But that only is the beginning.

Starting in the United States in 1993 as the GS 300, it was designed by ItalDesign Giugiaro but was only a modest success,

perhaps lagging in performance as it was powered by an inline six of 3.0L and 220 hp. While it might be said the new GS is a super refined step back to its original roots, this fourth generation is a whole different car.



### **Specifications**

Price \$48,600 to about \$58,000.  
Destination of \$925

### **Engine**

3.5L DOHC 24 valve  
V-6 306 hp @ 6,400  
rpm  
277 lb.-ft. @ 4,800  
rpm

### **Transmission**

Eight speed torque  
converter automatic

### **Configuration**

Front engine/rear  
wheel drive

### **Dimensions**

Wheelbase 112.2  
inches  
Length 190.7 inches

Width 72.4 inches  
Height 57.3 inches  
Track (f/r)  
62.0/62.6 inches  
Ground clearance  
5.1 inches  
Trunk capacity 14.1  
cubic feet  
Fuel Capacity 17.4  
gallons  
Weight 3,726 pounds  
GVWR 4,830 pounds  
Weight distribution  
(f/r) 53/47 percent  
Steering lock to  
lock 2.2-2.6 turns  
Turning circle 34.8  
feet  
Wheels 19X8 (f)  
19X9 (r) inch  
alloys  
Tires  
235/40RX19(f),  
265/35X19 (r)  
Coefficient of drag  
0.27

### **Performance**

0-60 mph 5.78  
seconds  
50-70 mph 3.11  
50-70 mph uphill  
4.17 seconds  
Top speed Governed  
at 142 mph  
Fuel economy EPA  
rated 29/34/31 mpg  
city/highway/combin

ed Expect 31 mpg overall in mixed driving. At 70 mph on cruise control two way run 39 mpg on longer level highway trips at legal speeds expect 37 mpg.

In this 2015 issue GS, Lexus saw fit to create the best L'Finnesse front end in their line up with an aggressive snout of a grille that says its one tough customer. It says, power, strength, and polish. Lexus also eliminated unnecessary lines and replaced them with subtle fluidity that has muscles, but a slick sinewy kind of a perfect athletic body that would have instant reactions, reflexes and responses. The smoothness of the rear window line blending into the trunk deck says it all. Coefficient of drag is a low 0.27.

While Lexus offered a 4.3 -4.6L V-8 in the second and third generation, the 3.5L V-6 Lexus GS 350 has found oodles of sublime power with 306hp at 6,400 rpm and 277 pounds of twist at 4,800 rpm which equates to 253 hp at that rpm. Power is sent to the rear wheels via an eight speed super slick automatic tranny. While the 1998 second gen GS400 with its innovative Optitron instrumentation was my favorite Lexus for year years, this new GS350 can now replace it in the midsize sedan category. But it's still hard to beat my favorite Lexes sedan of all which is the super high performance IS350. It's just a bit small for some families.

Performance of this new GS350 is world-class with 0-60 mph is 5.78 seconds. Passing times are also quick with 50-70 mph happening in 3.11 seconds and the same exercise up a six percent grade only slowing the clocks to 4.17 seconds. Excellent times partially due to its extremely flexible eight

speed tranny.

Fuel economy also benefits from the transmission. EPA rated at 19/29/23 mpg city/highway/combined, the GS averaged 22 mpg in overall fuel economy during 350 miles of aggressive driving, but when you relax and engaged the radar cruise control at 70 mph on a level highway fuel economy rises to a constant 31 mpg, remarkable for a 3,726 pound luxury sporty ride.

If after spending \$50 large for this type of motor vehicle you want more performance and improved fuel economy perhaps you should check out the recent review of the GS 450h. It had slightly improved performance and about 25 percent better fuel economy. But fully loaded it was also about 25 percent more money.

And sporty it is. With driver selectable Adaptive Variable Suspension on my F Sport plus electronic Variable Gear Ratio steering with super quick ratios from 2.6 to 2.2 turns lock to lock and every handling acronym thought of by mankind, this GS should do the twisties like water in a hose. In addition the standard GS gets 18 x 8 inch alloys shod with 235/45 series rubber, but the F Sport adds a huge upgrade to staggered 19 x 9 (front and 19 x 9 inch (rear) alloys plus 235/40 series Summer tires up front and 265/35 tires in the rear. Even the weight distribution is an excellent 53/47 percent. The result is sport car handling that effectively places the GS in the top tier of sporting sedans. Body roll is superbly controlled and the handling is itself is remarkably good and confidence inspiring. If there is any negative its feedback is isolated requiring some attention. Overall the GS is excellent when the road bends.

On the other side of the coin is a perfect balance of ride quality. It is an extremely quiet ride with no extraneous noise, just slippery warm butter smoothness with the engine spinning a slow 1,800 rpm at 70 mph. It is extremely solid and tight, exactly what you would expect from a sporty luxury

ride.

When it comes to safety, the F Sport gets huge 14 inch ventilated front discs and their performance is benchmark stopping in 40-41 feet from 40 mph. It also comes with every conceivable safety acronym ever devised by humans. About the only improvement would be having Jeff Gordon as your chauffeur. That might be a might expensive or maybe unobtainable.

Interiors don't get much better. The gorgeous deep tan leather is superb, and as with the outside the finishes are top quality. Front seats are sublime and rear seating is extremely generous especially considering that its exterior dimensions are of an average midsize sedan.

Instrumentation is complete but about the only knock with the GS is the mouse system used for controlling its sound system. It's distracting and difficult to use. It may keep the radio screen free of fingerprints (good for bank robbers), but it is annoying to use.

Pricing starts at \$48,600 plus \$925 for a first class boat ride from Japan. The F Sport package adds another \$4,825. Just about everything is standard including Bi-Xenon lighting (makes night into day) and navigation, but you can upgrade the already Carnegie Hall concert sound system with a Mark Levinson system for another \$1,380. Blind spot monitoring and auto folding outside mirrors will add \$700. Total package price with a couple of other items was \$57,330. Never thought I would like a V-6 this much in a sporty luxu ride.

*Larry Weitzman has been into cars since he was 5 years old. At 8 he could recite from memory the hp of every car made in the U.S. He has put in thousands of laps on racetracks all over the Western United States.*