

Road Beat: 2018 GS F best Lexus sedan



The 2018 Lexus GS F may be the best sports sedan ever.
Photos/Larry Weitzman

By Larry Weitzman

Lexus has a reputation of producing exquisite cars, beautifully finished with highly polished road manners, never mind occupant comfort. While that is still quite true, Lexus has never had a super high-performance automobile, a car you could almost take to the track and compete with. Yeah, sure they had an SC400, a performance GT coupe, but it wasn't a raucous, balls to the wall, pedal to the metal super sedan. That started to change with the introduction of the LFA super car, but the price was that of your first born (\$375,000).

Then Lexus surprised us with the recently introduced LC500

super coupe. Yeah, it had four seats, but the rear seats were for the severely vertically challenged or perhaps members of the Cirque de Soleil. But it was the best car I had ever driven, period. And it stickered for a base of just over \$90 large. Not only was it the best car I have ever driven, it was the best buy in a super car. Now Lexus has produced the best Super sedan I have ever driven – GS F. So good, that because of its ease of entry and exit, bigger size, true five-adult passenger capacity (I had a guy 6-foot-4 in the back seat that had at least half a foot of rear knee room), that I would rather drive the GS F. And it stickers for under \$85 large. Let me explain.

To create the GS, Lexus took a regular GS body (perhaps its only weakness as the GS design while still quite attractive, isn't my favorite as the roof shape is a bit tall and not well shaped) and installed the same 5.0L DOHC, 32 valve normally aspirated V-8 as found in the LC500. Knocking down 467 hp at a sky high 7,100 rpm and a peak twist of 389 pounds between 4,800 to 5,600 rpm. It makes sounds befitting a champion NASCAR. Nothing, and I repeat nothing has ever sounded better. It even comes with a switchable enhancement system called ASC (Active Sound Control) that enhances the melodious, sweet music this V-8 produces.

Performance is of super car, world class quality with an average 0-60 mph elapsed time of 4.18 seconds. With some further testing and improved technique 4.1 seconds would be the target as reflected by the F's astounding passing times of 1.79 and 2.19 seconds respectively in 50-70 mph simulated passing runs on the level and up a 6-7 percent grade. The 1.79 second time is the best ever achieved by the Road Beat, besting the Lexus LC500 V-8 (which ran 0-60 mph in 3.91 seconds) level 50-70 mph run by a tenth of a second and tying its 50-70 mph run up a grade. Perhaps a four second flat 0-60 mph is possible? It is the quickest sedan ever tested by the Road Beat.



Specifications

Price \$85,345 to about \$90,000

Engine

5.0L DOHC, 32 valve normally aspirated V-8 467 hp @ 7,100 rpm

389 lb.-ft. of torque @ 4,800-5,600 rpm

Transmission

Eight-speed torque converter automatic

Configuration

Longitudinal front engine/rear wheel drive

Dimensions

Wheelbase 112.2 inches

Length 193.5 inches

Width 72.6 inches

Height 56.7 inches

Track (f/r) 61.2/61.4 inches

Ground clearance 5.1 inches

Fuel capacity 17.4 gallons

Trunk capacity 14.0 cubic feet

Passenger volume 90.8 cubic feet

Curb weight 4,034 pounds

Weight distribution 53/47

percent

Wheels (f/r) 19X9/19X10
inches

Tires (f/r)
255/35X19/27535X19 inches

Steering lock to lock 2.84
turns

Turning circle 36.8 feet

Performance

0-60 mph 4.18 seconds

50-70 mph 1.79 seconds

50-70 mph uphill (6-7
percent) 2.19 seconds

Top speed Governed at 168
mph

Fuel economy EPA rated
16/24/19 mpg
city/highway/combined.

Expect 21-22 mpg in
rural/suburban driving and
29 mpg on the highway at
legal speeds.

And when running these tests, the sounds were literally intoxicating. The absolute best. Throttle response was linear and the engine really came alive when hitting about 4,500 rpm pulling like an F-15 on full afterburner right to red line. It doesn't get any better. If you love cars, you will marry this one without a prenup.

As to buying stock in Chevron or Exxon, that shouldn't be a problem as this world class super car returns reasonable fuel economy considering its other attributes. EPA numbers are 16/24/19 mpg city/highway/combined. In 500 miles of nearly delirious euphoria created by the exhaust and induction sounds (I had the superb Mark Levinson sound system off during much of the test) the "F" averaged 21.4 mpg. Highway fuel economy

at 70 mph with the engine turning a low 1,750 rpm averaged 29.1 mpg in a two-way run. In a 200-mile round trip from Placerville to Carson City and return, the "F" averaged 24.9 mpg and it was an aggressive 200 miles. It's hard to stay out of that throttle. I must comment as to the smaller 17.4-gallon fuel tank. Even a Camry gets an 18.5-gallon fuel tank, although you could stretch things out for about 500 miles before you have to push. Your own tank will probably require a stop before then.

But the "F" story doesn't end there. Handling is also spectacular, with an Adaptive Linear Suspension system using double wishbones up front and a multilink in the rear. Wheels are 19-inch gorgeous BBS manufactured forged alloys that are 9 inches wide up front and 10 inches wide in the rear shod with Michelin Pilot Super Sports, 255/35 and 275/35 tires respectively. Steering is a quick variable power electric rack that is 2.84 turns lock to lock and the turning circle is a tight 36.8 feet. Needless to say, it goes around corner like water in a hose. And it does it with a flat nimble precise attitude that defies its 4,034 pounds. It gets it done, easily as well, if not better than the Kia Stinger GT AWD of last week. It feels better than an "M" BMW when the road bends. You can shut off all the systems and slide and drift like no tomorrow in a totally controlled manner although the re-tire might be expensive. F inspires confidence. Best handling sedan Road Beat ever drove, end of story.

But wait, there is more, a whole lot more. Ride quality defies its handling capabilities. In other words, its supple and quiet like a Lexus. When cruising the engine is only a faint murmur and there is absolutely no wind or surprisingly no road noise from those super high-performance Michelins. It's perfect with a perfect Lexus demeanor.

And there are four noticeable drive modes, Eco (yeah, with this car, who are they kidding with Eco?), normal, Sport S and Sport S plus which control steering, suspension and throttle

mapping and shift points and action. Sport was perfect as you had paddle shifters as well that really were quick acting. In fact, the eight-speed torque converter auto cog swapper shifted like a dual clutch maybe faster. In Sport or Plus under hard throttle it shifted like a NASCAR, like banging through the gears but doing it quickly, smoothly and perfectly. One drive and you will understand.

Safety begins with every acronym which I switched off as the systems when operated acted too strongly against the steering actually making the car uncomfortable. Brakes are spectacular and huge Brembos 15- and 14-inch rotors surrounded with six piston and four piston calipers respectively. They are strong. Headlights are excellent.

Inside were superb, super comfortable red leather seats with black trim (Nice Lexus), that held you in place with the support necessary for the kind of driving one would expect this vehicle to do. Rear seating is similar. Instrumentation comes with a heads-up display a huge center tach that has a digital speedo in its center and a smaller back up analog speedo in the lower right. On the left is a trip computer. Materials are unbelievable with alcantara leather on the dash, headliner, inside the instrument bezel and more. Lexus outdid themselves.

OK, there is one knock and that is the controls for the otherwise beautiful sound system. It's a mouse and it sucks. It's requires too many steps and is too hard to control. Almost dangerous in a car like this. Find a station you like and leave it. The trunk is a large, well-shaped 14 cubic foot.

Pricing is not cheap with a sticker of \$84,350 plus \$995 for the boat from Aichi, Japan, factory. But when compared to its German competition, it becomes a bargain. My tester had a few options like a Mark Levinson sound system (\$1,380), orange painted calipers (\$300), flawless ultrasonic Blue Mica paint (\$595), Heads up display (\$900) and those beautiful BBS alloys

(\$600) bringing the Monroney total to \$89,120 for what I consider the very best performance sedan you can buy and at the sticker it is a bargain compared to the competition.

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.