

Road test: Lexus UX250

by Tim Saunders



Patience and understanding are required when driving the Lexus UX 250.

As an impatient, approaching middle aged man... I struggle with this especially when faced with the following issues:

1. When on a slope it rolls

forward after the park function and the handbrake are applied – thank goodness I park it some distance from the wall of my home

2. It takes far too long to engage drive and get the vehicle actually moving

3. The rear seatbelt sensors repeatedly sound an ear-piercing bleep when my children's car seats are unoccupied

4. There is not enough space for three car seats to fit as they should in the rear; one of them sits awkwardly at an angle

Combine these factors with a Friday night when I'm late night shopping these days (not clubbing or going to the pub any longer). And more tired than usual I feel very justified in being really quite fed up. And it shouldn't be the case when I'm driving a car valued at nearly £40,000.

Not only do the rear seatbelt sensors deafen me on my trip to the supermarket, giving me a very uncomfortable headache – and I don't usually suffer from these – it then does it on the return journey, too. What have I done to deserve this? I ask myself. This is absolutely ludicrous. I swipe an angry arm into the rear to try and move the offending carseats to see if this will help but of course it doesn't. What am I meant to do? Remove my three children's carseats every time they



FACTS AT A GLANCE

Lexus UX 250 with Premium Plus Pack (Terrane Khaki)

Price: From £39,105

Engine: 2-litre petrol

Top speed: 110mph

0-60mph: 8.5secs

Power: 176bhp

Economy: averaging 46mpg

are not in them? Having had time to simmer down, I think that the sensors think that the carseats are people that should be strapped in. It's a bit ridiculous really. My wife adds that these carseats are not very wide and that many people in this obese age that we live in will be much wider, making it more of a 2+2 if the truth be known.

Rather than promoting safety this ear-piercing repetitive beeping results in erratic driving to either get to the destination or to pull over to try to stop the damn problem. Regular readers will know that I drive a geriatric 2002 Ford Fiesta, which is as

basic as it gets. But, as I increasingly find, the rear seats allow for my children's three car seats; yes it's a bit tight but nothing like the much larger vehicles I have driven lately including the Vauxhall Insignia and this Lexus. And it's a great shame because it taints my view of the car, which does actually have some good aspects to it. For instance, while I don't warm to the exterior, parts of which remind me of American cars of the '80s, the interior is luxurious. We all love the high quality of the cream leather upholstery and the comfortable seats. 'I like the feel of the armrests,' says wife Caroline. 'The centre armrest is ingenious in the way it lifts and unique, I think.'

But these positives are then soon forgotten when trying to operate the overly complicated sat nav, which takes a long time for my wife to get used to – I haven't got the patience. The controls for the radio are interesting but again irritate me immensely as does the positioning of some of the other buttons and switches. You'll either love this or loathe it.

I have tried to understand the Lexus. The exterior design is striking and the hybrid concept should be appealing in helping the environment. My diesel Fiesta is hated by the environmentalists for all those unfriendly emissions. But I remain unconvinced about self charging hybrids and I'll tell you why. Rarely does the ev (electric vehicle) mode kick in despite me permanently being in economy mode. The only way I am able to get it to work is by literally stroking the accelerator pedal; my right foot has to be so light that this just serves as another way of really irritating me. We are able to travel in ev mode while driving down the road where we live at 9mph but any faster and it clicks over to petrol.

We take it to the Isle of Wight (to drive it into the sea, Henry jests) in the hope that I will rekindle my floundering friendship only to find that I am made to look a fool yet again. When waiting to board the ferry I push the engine start button and as the cars in front are already moving I too need to move with them but the system isn't ready and the Lexus isn't going anywhere, the steering wheel locks. I don't need this pressure. The cars behind become impatient and I have my head in my hands. After switching off and back on again we finally get moving but by this time the attendant tells me I must wait for the queue of 20 or 30 cars next to me to board. It's all just a bit embarrassing and I don't like it. Turn the ignition of a normal car and it will start immediately and that's what I've grown to expect. In life, especially since having children, I have grown to adapt to having low expectations so that I do not get disappointed but I do not expect to have to adapt this to my motoring needs as well.

The target market for this Lexus must be an affluent retired man who has time on his hands. Unfair? Well, as with my life in general, I have no time; I'm not here for long and I certainly won't be wasting it sitting around waiting for a lethargic vehicle to start. Push the start button and engage D in the Lexus and a good few moments pass while the system boots up to allow the driver to do what he is itching to do. Impatience results in the vehicle just rolling backwards or forwards depending on the incline it is on. It's just not good enough.

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