

## Right Size, Right Power

### Plug-In Hybrid Lexus Hits Sweet Spot in a Luxury Wrapper

By Derek Price

CARGAZING.COM

That was my week with the 2026 Lexus NX 450h+. I plugged it in at home, ran errands on electricity and watched the fuel gauge barely move. And yet, when it came time for a longer highway haul, there was no range anxiety, no route planning, no hunting for a fast charger. Just fill it up and go.

For most people, this is the sweet spot.

The NX 450h+ pairs a 2.5-liter four-cylinder gasoline engine with dual electric motors for a combined 304 horsepower. It uses a continuously variable transmission and all-wheel drive.

On paper, it will do 0-60 mph in about six seconds, and it returns an EPA-rated 34 mpg combined when using gasoline alone. It can also travel an estimated 37 miles on electricity.

In practice, it feels seamless.

Around town, it behaves like a proper EV. It's quiet, smooth and quick off the line. There's an immediate punch when you dip into the throttle, and it makes daily driving feel effortless. Merge onto the highway and the gas engine fades in without drama. The transition is so polished you stop noticing it after a day.

Yes, it's heavy. You're essentially carrying both an



The 2026 Lexus NX 450h+ features sharp styling, a signature spindle grille and compact luxury SUV proportions.

electric powertrain and a gasoline engine. That adds cost and complexity. My tester rang up at \$67,289 with options and destination.

But it works brilliantly.

The NX itself hits what I consider a Goldilocks size. With a 105.9-inch wheelbase and an overall length of 183.5 inches, it's easy to maneuver and park, yet it never feels cramped.

If you haven't driven an NX lately, try one. As the RX has grown larger and more expensive over the years, the NX has quietly stepped into the role of right-size Lexus SUV for many buyers.

It looks sharp, too. The spindle grille has mellowed into something more

cohesive, and the proportions are tidy and athletic without trying too hard.

On the road, the NX 450h+ walks a sensible line. It's not boring, but it's not a sport SUV either. The CVT removes any illusion of crisp gear changes, and if you push hard, the engine can drone.

Still, the steering has decent weight, and the suspension provides enough feedback to keep you engaged. It's composed in corners, stable at speed and wonderfully quiet over broken pavement.

This is a Lexus, after all. Comfort is the point.

Inside, the cabin delivers

on the brand promise. My tester featured a well-appointed interior with rich materials and a big 14-inch touchscreen. Crucially, Lexus keeps physical dials for volume and temperature.

Available Palomino leather brightens the space, and the panoramic glass roof adds airiness. The Mark Levinson audio system in my test vehicle was worth the splurge, delivering crisp, full sound without distortion.

Not everything is perfect. The cruise control selector on the steering wheel is an unmarked four-way rocker switch that I never quite mastered. For a brand that prides itself on ergonomics, that's a miss.

Rear seat space is adequate for adults, and cargo capacity is solid for the class, though not cavernous.

Where the NX 450h+ really shines is in its logic. If you can plug in at home or work, you'll do most of your daily driving on electricity. When you can't, or when you're heading out of town, it behaves like a normal hybrid with no compromises. You get efficiency, performance and peace of mind in one tidy package.

Competitors such as the Volvo XC60 Recharge and BMW X3 xDrive30e offer similar plug-in formulas, but Lexus leans harder into comfort and long-term reliability.

For many buyers, that reputation matters as much as horsepower.

I just wish the plug-in premium wasn't so steep. Base NX models are reasonably priced, but stepping into the 450h+ requires a real financial commitment. You're paying for two powertrains in one vehicle.

Still, after a week of barely visiting the pump, it's hard to argue with the concept.

This is a logical, comfortable, upscale crossover that feels tailor-made for modern suburban life.

Sometimes the smartest choice is also the most satisfying.

#### AT A GLANCE

##### WHAT WAS TESTED?

2026 Lexus NX 450h+ AWD (\$61,740). Options: Front cross traffic alert and lane change assist (\$270), Mark Levinson premium audio (\$1,020), panorama glass roof (\$500), panoramic view monitor (\$800), advanced park with remote park (\$480), technology package (\$375), cross bars (\$395), side puddle lamp (\$175), wheel locks (\$99), carpet cargo mat (\$140). Price as tested (including \$1,295 destination charge): \$67,289

##### BY THE NUMBERS

Wheelbase: 105.91 in.  
Length: 183.46 in.  
Width: 73.43 in.  
Height: 66.14 in.  
Power: 2.5-liter four cylinder and dual electric motors (combined 304 hp)  
Transmission:  
Continuously variable  
MPG: 34 combined city/highway

##### RATINGS

Style: 9  
Performance: 9  
Price: 7  
Handling: 8  
Ride: 9  
Comfort: 8  
Quality: 9  
Overall: 8

##### WHY BUY IT?

The NX 450h+ delivers electric driving for daily life without sacrificing road-trip freedom, all in a comfortable, right-size luxury SUV.

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#### A CLOSER LOOK



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FACTS, FIGURES AND RATINGS

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