

LIKES	DISLIKES
Build quality Performance (V6 & V8) Refinement Smart key central locking	Steering feel (GS430) Minor switch location Parking brake pedal

Making its first local appearance in 1997, the original Lexus GS300 filled a crucial gap between the “Camryesque” ES300 and top of the line LS400. Aiming to attract sales from the established Europeans – in particular BMW’s 5 series, the Japanese contender certainly created a few ripples. Now an all new model takes up the challenge. Unlike its predecessor, buyers will have two engine choices - a direct injection 3.0 litre V6 or 4.3 litre V8. The newcomer’s style should certainly turn a few heads – part of Lexus’ plan to appeal to a younger demographic. Looking more coupe than sedan, the GS series is best described as aggressively elegant. Its low, sweeping roofline and long wheelbase creating a powerful first impression.

## VALUE FOR MONEY

### PRICING

Keeping variations to a minimum the range consists of the GS300 Sport - \$95,000, GS300 Sport Luxury - \$112,100 and the range topping GS430 Sport Luxury at \$137,000.

### STANDARD FEATURES

Of course there is an extensive range of standard equipment on the Sport Luxury models tested, including: dual zone air-conditioning, intelligent cruise control, “Smart key” central locking, leather upholstery, power front seats with climate control, power windows, alloy wheels, six disc CD player, 14 speaker sound system, power glass sunroof, rain sensing wipers and satellite navigation. While there are no extras for the Sport Luxury variants; “entry level” GS300 buyers can option a \$2,500 power sunroof.

## DESIGN & FUNCTION

### SPACE & PRACTICALITY

With its low roofline and high waisted look you might expect the GS’ interior space to be compromised, but this isn’t the case. Room up front is generous, even though the high, deep dashboard and wide centre console wrap around you. In the rear most passengers should be happy with the available head and shoulder space, but legroom might be compromised behind a tall driver. Storing items shouldn’t be an issue, with most knick knacks finding a home in the centre console box and door pockets. Although luggage space is excellent, access to it is through a shallow “letter box” style opening - a compromise of the fastback

styling. The rear seats are fixed, so longer items will need to poke through the lockable ski hatch. Mounted under the boot floor is a full size spare tyre on an alloy rim. If you need to change a tyre there’s no need to get dirty, a valet pack with gloves, soap and embroidered handtowel is standard. Another nice thought is a tin of touch up paint – remember those!

### COMFORT

At this end of the market you expect to be cosseted, and the Lexus’ climate controlled power seats do a good job. More sports style than limousine like, they are comfortable with good lateral support. A total of six settings provide heating or cooling - the latter very effective over a long trip. The steering wheel is power adjustable for rake and reach, moving away from the driver when the ignition is off.

Passengers in the rear aren’t neglected; the seat is well shaped and supportive, but only meant for two.

### ERGONOMICS

Instrumentation is housed in a deep binnacle ahead of the driver. Featuring a dark metallic - machined finish, the gauges are permanently lit. Not only are they easy to read, but nice to look at. Dominating the centre dash is a multi-function touch screen displaying sat-nav, audio and climate control information. The surrounding switches move you between menus. If you find the screen distracting you can turn it off, but you’re left with a black void covered in fingerprints. Climate control switches sit at the base of the centre console, within easy reach. Multi-function controls on the steering wheel handle the main audio functions, but the radar cruise control switch is awkwardly placed. In an unusual move the mirror, odometer, boot release and fuel flap switches are housed in a drop down pod on the driver’s side dash. Hidden from view by the steering wheel it makes simple functions difficult. Another nuisance is the parking brake pedal which intrudes into the driver’s footspace.

Vision to the front and sides is good despite the broad roof pillars. The shallow rear screen would normally make reversing a challenge, but the bootlid mounted camera provides a good field of vision, and combined with front and rear sensors helps calm nervous parkers.

### SAFETY

A five star Euro NCAP safety rating is just the start for the new GS series. There are ten airbags in total, including two knee bags for front occupants. Primary safety includes the usual ABS, EBD and BA, but GS430 buyers receive Lexus’ VDIM (Vehicle Dynamics



## TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS GS300

### ENGINE

Type..... Alloy V6 DOHC  
Capacity in litres.....2.995  
Induction..... Direct Electronic Fuel Injection  
Fuel recommendation .....PULP  
Claimed max. power.....183kW @ 6200rpm  
Claimed max. torque.... 310Nm @ 3500rpm

### TRANSMISSION

Type.....6 speed automatic  
Driving wheels ..... Rear  
**WHEELS** ..... Alloy 17 x 7.5  
Tyres ..... Dunlop Sport 225/50 R17 94W  
Spare ..... Full size on alloy rim

### STEERING

Type...Electric power assisted rack & pinion  
Turns lock to lock.....3.2  
Turning circle.....10.7

### DIMENSIONS

Mass..... 1620kg  
Length.....4825mm  
Width (incl. mirrors 2005mm).....1820mm  
Height .....1430mm  
Ground clearance (measured) .....149mm  
Seating capacity.....5  
Fuel tank capacity..... 71 litres

### TOWING

Max. towed mass (trailer plus load)....2000kg

### NRMA THEFT RATING

Points on 0-120 scale (high score best).....59

**WARRANTY** ..... 4 year / 100,000km

**MANUFACTURED IN** ..... Japan

## TEST RESULTS

### ACCELERATION

50 - 80 km/h (in Drive) ..... 3.9sec  
60 -100 km/h (in Drive) ..... 5.1sec  
0 - 80 km/h..... 5.9sec  
0 - 100 km/h..... 8.1sec  
0 - 400 metres ..... 15.9sec

### FUEL CONSUMPTION (litres/100 km)

Average (ADR 81/01).....9.8

### BRAKING

Distance to stop from 80 km/h.... 25.1metres

### NOISE

Interior at constant 80 km/h..... 61.8dB(A)

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Integrated Management) system. Thirteen sensors throughout the car monitor its progress. Linked to active steering, electronic braking and intelligent throttle control, the system's powerful software looks at identifying problem scenarios hopefully before they become critical. Radar cruise control plays an important part overseeing speed and vehicle proximity on the highway. The system takes active safety to a new level. Adaptive headlights which "look" through corners are another impressive feature.

#### **BUILD QUALITY & FINISH**

Lexus has built its image on above average quality, and the new GS carries on the tradition. Superbly assembled, it is hard to fault. Flawless paint, tight shut lines and using quality materials, the car feels expensive. The only jarring note is the plastic looking, high gloss "woodgrain" trim.

#### **SECURITY**

Scoring 59/120 the Lexus fares poorly against other luxury opposition. Audi's A6 sets the standard with a chart topping 117/120. Scoring big points on practicality is the "smart key" locking system. Even with the remote control in your pocket the car unlocks as you touch the door handle. Walking towards the car at night illuminates the door handles and interior, a single LED spot lighting the Lexus symbol on the steering wheel. Very clever. Get behind the wheel, press the start button on the dash and you're away. Keys are being consigned to history.

### **ON THE ROAD**

#### **FUEL**

Requiring a diet of PULP fuel the direct injection V6 compares favourably with similarly equipped European competition, while the V8 moves towards the higher end of the category.

#### **PERFORMANCE**

Both powerplants give impressive performance. The V6 provides an extra 17kW over the previous model's straight six, and it shows in strong acceleration figures. Already a proven performer in other Lexus models, the 4.3 litre V8 stormed through our tests. While its 208kW may not look much for a modern V8, variable valve timing and a mountain of low down torque have it surging ahead. Common to both engines is their smoothness, flexibility and stress free character. While steeper gradients might require more throttle in the V6, the fact that it almost goes head to head with the V8 is notable. All that's missing is the V8's distant burble.

Both engines are mated to a six speed automatic transmission. Gearchanges are virtually imperceptible, without any harshness when using the kickdown function. In manual mode the situation is the same. Slick, smooth changes up or down the box are achieved with a flick of the wrist.

#### **RIDE**

While a host of changes have occurred under the car's skin, it's what you feel at the seat that counts. Neither car exhibits any harshness, no matter what the road conditions. Both suspensions iron out the bumps, whether it's patchy suburban roads or give and take country byways. Standard on the GS430 is AVS (Active Variable Suspension). Designed

to manage ride quality and vehicle attitude, driver's have a choice of two suspension settings. Switch to sport mode and the only appreciable difference is some increased firmness over rougher surfaces.

#### **HANDLING & STEERING**

There has been a lot of development put into the GS' front wishbone, multi-link rear suspension. Generating enormous amounts of grip both cars are easy to handle, displaying mild understeer at higher speeds. Where the two differ markedly is in the character of their steering. While the GS300 has a linear, slightly subdued feel, the GS430's active system, coupled with wider tyres wasn't as friendly. Easily affected by irregular surfaces, the GS430 tram lined and twitched across poorer roads. The steering's notchy feel didn't help matters. Even under medium braking the car preferred to follow the ruts in the road, requiring some correction at the wheel. As a package the GS300's simpler system is easier to live with.

#### **BRAKING**

Up to the job under most conditions, the new model's larger brakes can start to feel the pressure when pushing on. Under easier circumstances the V8 model displayed different characteristics to its V6 brother. While the GS300 needed a little more force to slow things, the GS430, equipped with an electronic system tended to feel grabby when slowing to a halt or moving off from a standstill.

#### **SMOOTHNESS & QUIETNESS**

This is where Lexus established its reputation. There are times when you wonder if there is an engine up front. Whether V6 or V8, there is not a murmur or vibration anywhere in the car. On the move it's similar. Mechanically seamless, smooth and fuss free the GS just gets on with the job. Tyre noise is the only intruder into an otherwise silent cabin.

#### **SUMMARY:**

For anyone after a supremely well built, comfortable and more importantly, quiet form of transport, this is the car for you. If you are looking for an involving high performance sedan then the new GS series may have missed the mark. Both versions are quick, and the V8 is deceptively fast. But if you want to be part of the process, the Lexus' talks to you in hushed tones, sometimes leaving you out of the loop.

### **TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS GS430**

#### **ENGINE**

Type .....Alloy V8 DOHC  
Capacity in litres ..... 4.293  
Induction .....Electronic Fuel Injection  
Fuel recommendation..... PULP  
Claimed max. power ... 208kW @ 5600 rpm  
Claimed max. torque ... 417Nm @ 3500 rpm

#### **TRANSMISSION**

Type ..... 6 speed automatic  
Driving wheels .....Rear

**WHEELS**..... Alloy 18 x 8  
Tyres.....Yokohama Advan 245/40R18 93Y  
Spare..... Full size on alloy rim

#### **STEERING**

Type ..... Power assisted rack & pinion  
Turns lock to lock ..... 2.7  
Turning circle ..... 10.7

#### **DIMENSIONS**

Mass .....1695kg  
Length..... 4825mm  
Width (incl. mirrors 2005mm) ..... 1820mm  
Height ..... 1430mm  
Ground clearance (measured) ..... 123mm  
Seating capacity..... 5  
Fuel tank capacity..... 71 litres

#### **TOWING**

Max. towed mass (trailer plus load)....2000kg

#### **NRMA THEFT RATING**

Points on 0-120 scale (high score best)..... 59

**WARRANTY** ..... 4 year / 100,000km

**MANUFACTURED IN**.....Japan

#### **TEST RESULTS**

##### **ACCELERATION**

50 - 80 km/h (in Drive) ..... 3.2sec  
60 -100 km/h (in Drive) ..... 4.5sec  
0 - 80 km/h ..... 5.2sec  
0 - 100 km/h ..... 7.3sec  
0 - 400 metres ..... 15.3sec

##### **FUEL CONSUMPTION (litres/100 km)**

Average (ADR 81/01) ..... 11.4

##### **BRAKING**

Distance to stop from 80 km/h.... 24.7metres

##### **NOISE**

Interior at constant 80 km/h.....62.9dB(A)