MPH Vehicle Solutions
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Lexus IS Saloon

WhatCar? verdict

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For:
The IS serves up punchy performance, comes well equipped and should be reliable.
Against:
The ride is unsettled, it suffers from too much road noise and you'll be cramped in the back.

On the road verdict

Performance

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The diesel's gearing is too high
You need to work the 201bhp 2.5-litre V6 petrol engine hard to extract maximum performance, but it pulls cleanly from low revs and is punchy enough for assured overtaking. The 175bhp turbodiesel is let down by tall gearing that makes it feel laboured when cruising in sixth. However, the V8 in the high performance IS-F model is sensational, churning out 417bhp and hurtling the car from 0-62mph in just 4.8 seconds.

Ride and handling

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A keen drive spoiled by an unsettled ride
The IS turns in swiftly, grips keenly and is unfazed by mid-corner bumps. It's a shame, then, that the steering doesn't offer more feedback and that the pay-off for impressive control over rollercoaster roads is a stiff and unsettled feel around town and on the motorway. These limitations also apply to the IS-F.

Refinement

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Generally quiet, but too much road noise
Usually you can take the quiet and refinement of a Lexus for granted. Certainly, the 2.5-litre petrol engine is suitably hushed and wind noise well suppressed. The diesel is quiet at speed, too, but it chugs noisily around town. Both these and the IS-F performance car suffer from road noise – especially over coarse surfaces – which makes them more tiring on a long drive than they should be.

Ownership verdict

Buying

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Well priced, but high company car tax
The Lexus IS is well priced, especially once you take into account the generous standard equipment. It's thousands of pounds cheaper than the equivalent BMW 3 Series and Mercedes C-Class. However, the diesel and V6 petrol both have higher carbon dioxide emissions and worse fuel consumption than these rivals. The IS-F is priced closer to its competition, but also has more kit.

Quality

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Should give years of trouble-free driving
The cabin materials aren't as appealing as those in a 3 Series, but everything feels well screwed together. You shouldn't have to make any unscheduled trips to the dealer, either, because Lexus consistently performs superbly in the JD Power Customer Satisfaction survey.

Safety and security

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Everything you'd expect to keep you safe
Lexus was the first car manufacturer to pick up a faultless 100% score in What Car? Security Supertests. All IS models come equipped with at least eight airbags, while the IS-F has 10, and all variants have a host of electronic systems to look out for you when cornering or braking.

In the cabin verdict

Behind the wheel

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Vehicles	Finance	Tracking	Valeting	S.M.A.R.T	Maintenance
New and Used	Contract hire	Live vehicle tracking	Internal and external	Dents	Pay as you go
Cars and commercial	Finance lease	Timesheets	Supagard	Scatches	Fixed
SuperCars	Hire purchase	Site reports	Autoglym	Alloy Wheels	Fleet support
Part Exchange	Conditional purchase	Mileage	DiamondBrite	Repairs	Breakdown recovery

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Logical controls and a good range of adjustment

The controls are logically laid out, and you get a touch-screen to keep clutter to a minimum if you specify options like sat-nav. Taller drivers may feel they're perched too high, but most people will be able to get comfortable. Every model comes with an eight-way electrically adjustable driver's seat.

Space and practicality

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Cramped in the back and the boot isn't big enough

There's plenty of space upfront, but anyone travelling in the back seats is less well catered for. A VW Golf costing half as much has more rear legroom, headroom is equally limited and if the front seats are set low there's little space for rear-seat passengers' feet. The boot is small and awkwardly shaped, too, with significant wheelarch intrusion.

Equipment

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Typically Lexus - lots of toys as standard

Standard kit makes the big-name German brands look stingy. Even the base SE model gets alloy wheels, climate control, keyless entry and a 13-speaker sound system with CD changer. SE-I brings front and rear parking sensors and heated leather seats, while SE-L adds rain-sensing wipers, adaptive Xenon headlights, memory seats and electric steering wheel adjustment. The IS-F has 19-inch alloys, sat-nav and a reversing camera.

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