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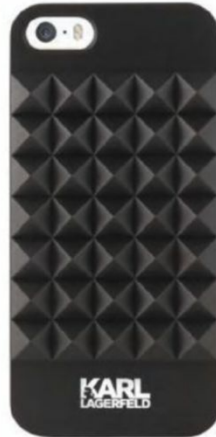


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PUBLISHING

Printed by PCP, Telford, TF7 4QQ
Telephone 01952 585 585
Distributed by Inter-Media

*What Mobile is published
12 times a year*

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Tel 01737 457 157
Email whatmobile@inter-media.co.uk
Post What Mobile Subscriptions,
Intermedia Brand Marketing Ltd,
Abbey House, Clarendon Road,
Redhill, Surrey, RH1 1QZ

It's the same old story



Have you noticed that practically all mobile device advertising appears to be aimed at happy shiny people under the age of 25?

Believe the magazine ads and TV and film commercials from the likes of Three, O2, EE, Samsung and Sony (and there are more) and you would think that anyone past 40 with adult responsibilities is not interested in mobile technology. Everyone who uses a mobile, it seems, is an attractive, white-toothed, perfectly groomed, cool, fashionable, metrosexual, hipster with at least 30 laughing and attractive friends. Certainly the millions of consumers over the Jurassic age of 55 seems to be of no interest to the similarly shiny people who dream the marketing and advertising concepts. Yet people in their middle-50s and over grew up with technology. They were in their early 20s when the first micro computers were invented with their arcane interfaces and operating systems that required a degree of technical expertise no modern consumer would put up with. Ever tried printing out a WordStar document from a CPM computer hooked up to a daisy wheel printer with an RS232 interface? Thought not. Today's 60-year-olds mastered the early internet with command-driven bulletin boards connected through a dial-up modem offering astonishing speeds of 300bps. That's around 1,000 times slower than average broadband speeds. Wow. Just watch those letters and numbers slowly appearing on your (mono) screen. Today's 'oldies' can easily use Android, Windows and iOS. Why wouldn't they? They mastered the art of recording TV programmes on their VHS video recorders. The fact is that we are living at a time when super-powerful technology has never been so easy for people to use – both old and young.

Win a free smartphone

We're now into the second month of the prestigious What Mobile Awards 2015 when you, the reader, are the judges who will decide who is deserving of recognition for supplying the best products and services. We've got four flagship smartphones to give away in a prize draw to encourage you to put your X in the box. Go to whatmobile.net and cast your vote. Four lucky winners will soon be glad they did.

The What Mobile team

INSIDE STORY



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WIN A PAIR OF STK INTENSE WIRELESS HEADPHONES WORTH £99.99!



We've teamed up with our friends at STK to offer one of our lucky readers the chance to win a pair of Intense Wireless Headphones, which scored an excellent 4 stars in this month's accessories section. The all-metal design gives them a seriously sleek finish and the sound is pretty good to boot, with a natural frequency response that's suited to a wide variety of music genres. For a chance to win, just answer the simple question below.

What is the frequency response of the Intense Wireless Headphones?

- A. 18Hz - 22KHz**
- B. 20Hz - 20KHz**
- C. 25Hz - 21KHz**

Email your entry, name and address (one only) to:
competitions@whatmobile.net
The winner will be contacted via email the following month.

Sweating the small stuff: 1. The promoter of this competition is Clark White Publishing Ltd. 2. The competition is open to all UK residents aged 18 years or over, excluding employees of What Mobile, all participating companies, its agents or families and any company associated with this competition. 3. By entering, all entrants will be deemed to have accepted these rules. 4. All entry instructions form a part of the terms and conditions. 5. Closing date: 5 October 2015. 6. Only one entry per email/IP address will be accepted. 7. The correct winning entry will be selected randomly by the administrator of the What Mobile Facebook page. The winner, who must be a UK resident, will be sent a PNY PowerPack. 8. No cash alternative or other device will be offered. 9. No correspondence will be entered into except that the name of the winner will be available upon written request. 10. You accept that the competition prize may be an open box item that was previously reviewed in the magazine by one of our reporters

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Samsung Galaxy S6 Edge +

Samsung stays high on cost and quality with its latest smartphone entry

Samsung has finally revealed its long-anticipated Galaxy S6 Edge+ at its Samsung London Unpacked event. With new software and a huge new screen, it's one up on its precursor.

In recent years, Samsung appears to have been staying steady in its position as one of the world's top-selling smartphone manufacturers. Can the Samsung Galaxy S6 Edge+ keep it there?

With a huge 5.7" screen, the phone is bigger than its sister phone, the S6 Edge, which measures up at 5.1". To put that into perspective, the screen on the iPad mini 3 is only a couple of inches bigger, at 7.9".

FAVOURITES APPS

The software has also undergone an upgrade. While the previous model let you call up your contacts list along the edge of the phone, the new Edge+ also includes a customisable list of your favourite apps. No more hunting among 20 bright icons to find Twitter or Facebook or that addictive time-waster game.

Samsung seem to be focusing heavily on the video side of things for its new features. A Live Broadcast app lets you transmit video via YouTube on a 20-second delay. Want to show your sister a fireworks display from a hundred miles away, or transmit a university lecture to a fellow student? Live Broadcast lets you do just that.

Or how about shooting a quick video or four? Collage mode lets you shoot four six-second videos

and play them simultaneously, letting you get multiple angles – or multiple people – in one scene.

WIRELESS CHARGING

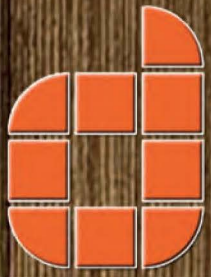
All this video might take up a lot of battery, but fortunately Samsung has thought of that too. Along with its new phone, it has released a new wireless battery charging platform, aptly named the Fast Charge. When the phone is centred on the circular platform, it can go from 0 to 100% charge in only two hours. Using the old-fashioned cable, it's even faster: flat to full charge in just 90 minutes.

If you want to share video across devices, Samsung has an answer for that as well. The Galaxy S6 Edge+ supports SideSync, a slightly more awkward but more cross-platform compatible



version of Apple's iCloud, which allows a connection between phone, PC, and tablet for easy file-sharing and backup.

Due to be released in black, gold, white and silver, Samsung's newest Galaxy will cost customers £749.00. The Samsung Galaxy S6 Edge+ releases on the 3rd of September and should be available by the time this issue hits the shops.



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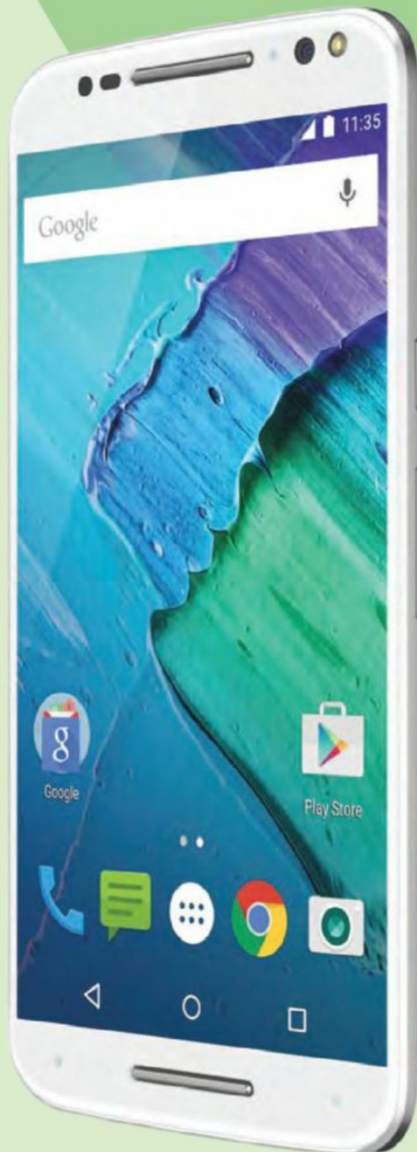
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Moto X Style

Motorola caused a storm at its recent press event in July with the launch of its new range-topping Moto X. Will it be the flagship killer everybody expects?

It's hard to believe that only a few years ago, Motorola was a struggling brand that seemed like it was practically done for. Their recent smartphones have been major successes with the public, primarily because of stock Android software and good hardware at a competitive retail price. The Moto G is widely regarded as one of the best budget handsets available, while the Moto X offered flagship performance for a fraction of its rivals. When Motorola announced a huge event at the end of July that would completely revitalise its entire smartphone range, people were eagerly anticipating what the company had up its sleeve. Of the three handsets that were announced, it was the flagship Moto X Style which made the most waves.



X FACTOR

Aesthetically, the device keeps itself much the same as past iterations. It's got the same basic shape as the Moto X of yore, with the rear Motorola logo still in the same spot as before. It's now water resistant, with a metal strip stretching around the camera sensor and logo, plus a slightly recessed groove at the top of the device. The rear plastic has also gone, with the

stock finish being a silicon backing that should be adverse to fingerprints and easy to grip. The Moto Maker software is once again back to help you personalise the device, giving you the choice of several colours and various finishes.

FUTURE PROOF?

It carries some market-leading specifications inside, though it remains to be seen if these will be enough to make the device truly future-proof. For the brains, Motorola has chosen the hexa-core Snapdragon 808 CPU and an Adreno 418 GPU. While these are by no means bad chips, you have to wonder with the imminent release of the Snapdragon 820 whether it could be the deciding factor for some enthusiasts. Running stock Android should help to get more out of it than usual, as you won't have an intrusive launcher eating up valuable processing cycles. With 3GB RAM, it's once again at the top of the bunch but not hitting above its weight. Devices such as the OnePlus 2 are already making their way to the market with 4GB RAM and they're also extremely cost-effective.

TRUMP CARDS

All this considered, the Moto X still has a few trump cards up its sleeve. The first is the camera, which comes in at a massive 21 megapixels. Using a brand new and considerably large 1/2.4 sensor from Sony, it looks like it should be capable of great photos in both daytime and low-light conditions. It has got all the latest must-have features including two-tone dual LED flash and phase-detect autofocus, which allows for faster focusing particularly in low-light scenarios. Popular photography referencing website DXoMark ranked the image quality of its photographs in second place, with only the Samsung Galaxy S6 Edge narrowly beating it.

The second is the screen, which is a razor sharp LCD Quad HD panel with a huge 1440x2560 resolution. At 520ppi, you can expect the image to be on a par with the LG G4 and Samsung Galaxy S6 Edge, which had some of the best displays on the market. Lastly, it has a huge 3,000mAh battery and expandable memory, two features which a lot of the present competition don't seem to have. These should help it stand out within a crowded marketplace of premium devices. The device will be available to purchase from September 2015 and via the Moto Maker website. Standard models will also be available through high street retailers and phone carriers.

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Sounds and vision

01 / ★★★★★

Urbanista Boston Wireless Earphones

Price £59.99. Available from September at Carphone Warehouse

Enjoy music on the move with the new Urbanista Boston Headphones. These little in-ear cans have a big sound and are fully water resistant, meaning you can enjoy a quiet stroll in the rain and not have to worry about them getting damaged. Described as having a bass-centric sound, we actually found them to be quite neutral across the frequency spectrum. They're a little soft at the extreme ends, though there is good separation between instruments and a wide stereo field. The Bluetooth aspect worked flawlessly, with quick pairing and in-line controls. As an added bonus, they work with all major smartphone brands including Windows Phone.

- + Good separation.
- + Secure fit and plenty of bud options
- + Works with all smartphone brands
- Little soft
- Bit empty sounding
- Fit is not for everyone



01

02



02 / ★★★★★

Gear4 Street Party Wireless 3

£29.99. Available now from HMV and Dixons

This little Bluetooth speaker comes in at an incredibly cheap price and manages to pack in NFC and a passive radiator for enhanced bass response. It helps to create a bit more low-end at louder volumes, though it's not quite as much as we expected. In terms of overall sound, it's a bit muddy and the frequency extension is a little limited when compared with more expensive speakers. Pairing with Bluetooth was extremely fast, with a short seek time when searching for the device. If you're after a bargain wireless speaker, this is a perfectly acceptable option.

- + Compact design
- + Clear sound
- + NFC at a bargain price
- Pretty narrow frequency range
- Lacking in bass
- A little muddy sounding

AT LAST – A SMARTPHONE FOR BEGINNERS

The amazing new

Doro Liberto[□] 82 Mini is a compact smartphone for beginners. With all of the functionality of other smartphones, it also comes with step-by-step guides on screen for all major applications.



You can buy this phone for just £1 on pay as you go at Vodafone shops nationwide and the Vodafone online store

Using the **Doro Liberto[□] 82 Mini** is the perfect way to join the smartphone revolution. The uniquely designed touch screen allows for easier choices and builds confidence to send messages, make calls, take photos, check the weather or even Google the crossword answers. There is also a remote helper function which means a trusted friend or family member can assist from anywhere, anytime, if needed. And when the battery is charging, the unique cradle also turns the Liberto[□] 820 Mini into an alarm clock, a radio, or even a digital photo frame. Smart, but simple.



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03 / ★★★★★

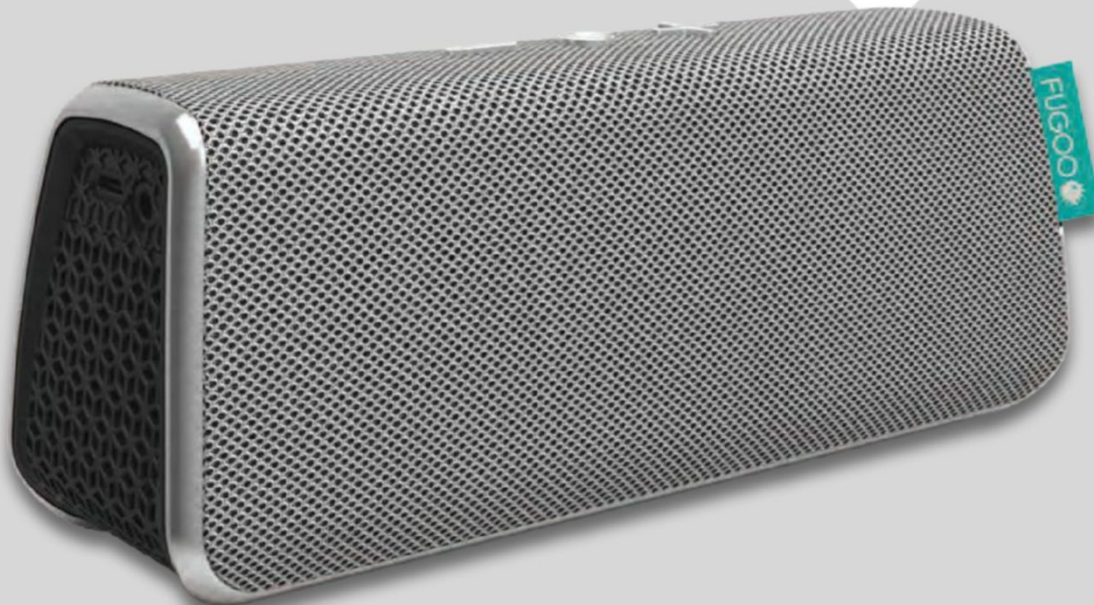
Fugoo Style Bluetooth Speaker

£149.99. Available now from Amazon.co.uk

Jumping in at the premium end of the Bluetooth speaker market, the Fugoo Style is a very attractive speaker with some great design aesthetics. It looks expensive and definitely has the sound to back it up, with a huge frequency range that extends pretty low considering the size. Clarity is top-notch, with plenty of sizzle in the treble and a good amount of instrument separation. There's also full weather-proofing and a 40 hour battery life, which proved to be mostly true when testing. Pairing can be a little slow and the lack of NFC is a disappointment considering the price. There's also an irritating American startup voice, which we couldn't figure out how to turn off, but this is a minor niggle.

- + Big, clear sound
- + Small footprint
- + Looks great
- Slow pairing
- Annoying startup voice
- Little slow to charge

03



04



04 / ★★★★★

View Quest Christie

£99.99. available now from viewquest.co.uk

The View Quest Christie is a fully featured DAB and FM radio that also happens to have both Bluetooth and NFC capabilities. With its retro styling, you'd be forgiven for thinking it stepped out of the 1960s. It's a great looking unit with leather trim and metal edging that perfectly captures the trendy retro-chic image. Pairing was effortless, with great sound quality across all modes. Treble was well represented, with a good amount of bass. Cranking the volume up, this thing really does get loud. Anybody having a house party will be well equipped here. The lack of a battery is disappointing, though one can be purchased as an optional extra.

- + Good sound quality
- + Very loud
- + Looks fantastic
- Battery not included as standard
- Heavy

05 / ★★★★★

Cobra Drive HD CDR 900

£179.99. Available from November at Argos.co.uk

Cobra's range-topping CDR 900 dash cam is a deceptive little unit. It's small enough to sit in the palm of your hand, yet the quality of the recordings are excellent. The extremely wide 160-degree lens allows easy capture of everything that's in front of you, while the built-in Wi-Fi beamer allows you to pair it with your smartphone. From there, just download the app (Android and iOS only) to see the footage being broadcast in real-time. It even has a built-in accelerometer, which measures G-forces from things such as impacts and rapid acceleration. If you're after a premium dash cam with all the bells and whistles, the Cobra Drive HD CDR 900 is top of its range.

- + Wide viewing angle
- + Excellent picture quality
- + Small and compact
- Controls can be a little bit fiddly

05



06



06 / ★★★★★

STK Intense Headphones

£99.99. Available now from Stk-acc.com

This pair of premium cans offer some serious style for less than a hundred quid. With an all-metal body and comfortable faux-leather pads, they're easy to wear for long periods and fully adjust according to the size of your bulbous head. Sound quality is good, with a very forward soundstage that just teeters on the edge of sharp. There's plenty of energy and detail in the treble, which can sometimes become a little over-encompassing, though there's plenty of excitement to be had from them. Bass is a little bit on the light side, though the general consensus would be that they sound closer to neutral than anything else. Bluetooth performance was flawless, with good battery life and a relatively fast charge time.

- + Seriously loud
- + Well constructed
- + Good overall sound
- A touch too bright
- Light on bass



07

07 / ★★★★★

STK Flasko Headphones

£69.99.

Available now from Stk-acc.com

This rugged Bluetooth speaker is fully splash-proof to protect against the rain and has a tough carry clip included. It looks a bit like a flask, with a round shape for full 360-degree sound. The weight of the device is pretty substantial, with a solid rubber outside that makes it feel extremely durable. The rear of the speaker features a bass port, while the front deals with the mid-range and treble. Overall sound quality on the STK Flasko is OK, with a slightly rounded tone that cuts off the extremes of each. Things cut through clear enough on the mid-range but the limited extension gives it somewhat of a muffled tone.

- + Extremely rugged
- + Splash-proof
- + Easy to carry
- Slightly narrow frequency range
- Love/ hate aesthetics

08 / ★★★★★

View Quest Blighty

£49.99. Available now from viewquest.co.uk

DAB radios are rarely inspiring but the View Quest Blighty manages to impress with its small footprint and elegant, retro-chic styling. Although it's easy to access music streaming services on your smartphone, the process uses up valuable data. DAB radios are still one of the best ways to listen to high quality radio streams on the go, without using data in the process. Although there are only 10 preset slots available, favourite stations can easily be swapped in and out between them. Sound quality is excellent and the battery lasts for almost 10 hours, which is perfect for long days in the office. It may only be a DAB radio, but it's a damn good one at that.

- + Small and portable
- + Excellent sound quality
- 10 preset slots is a bit low
- LCD screen could be better

08





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WHAT MOBILE

REVIEWS

This issue's reviews lead with a close look at the Panasonic Lumix DMC-CM1, a professional camera with a smartphone thrown in.



“The Panasonic Lumix DMC-CM1 still represents the pinnacle of smartphone photography”

20/ **Panasonic Lumix DMC-CM1**

24/ **Sony Xperia Z4**

28/ **LG G4c**

30/ **HTC 626**

How we review

To show you where a device succeeds or fails, we grade each device in five key areas.

Performance

First we fully test the speed and power of each device.

Usability

Next we find out how well the device functions in daily use.

Design

Then we rate the style and quality of the overall design.

Features

What kind of unique features and add-ons does it have?

Final verdict

A rating out of five, balancing cost versus performance.

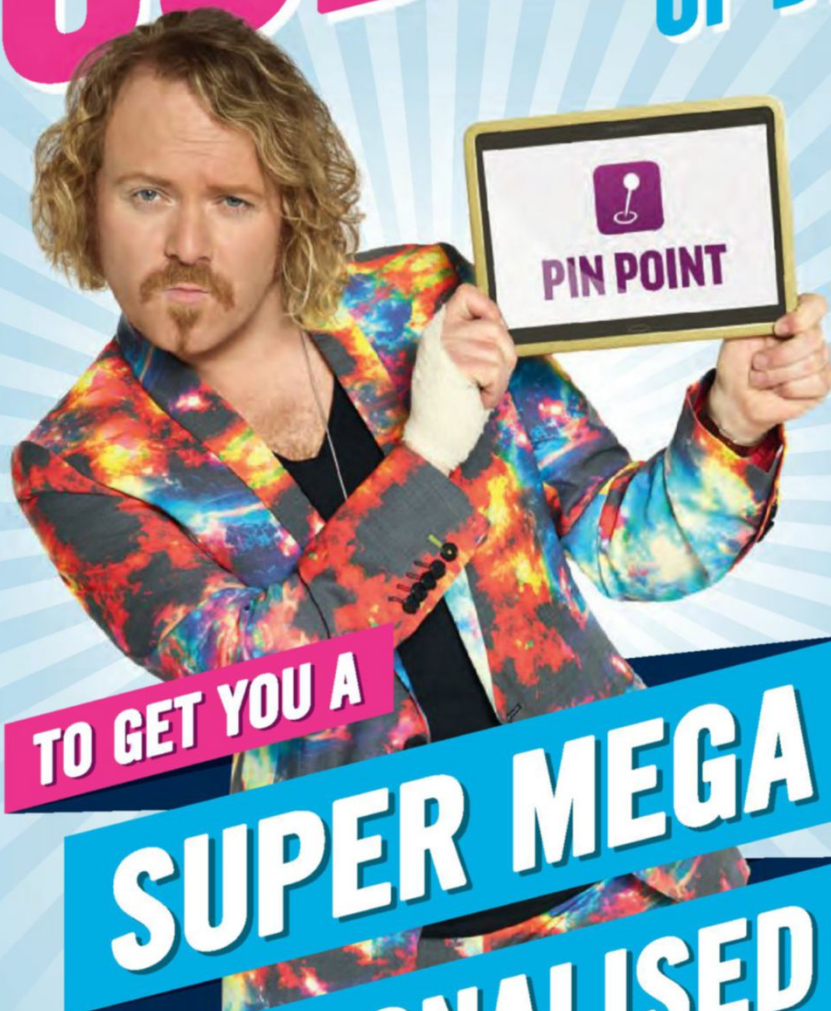
Editor's choice

Only the very best devices will win our What Mobile Editor's Choice award.



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Panasonic Lumix DMC-CM1

Panasonic's latest creation is a professional camera with a smartphone thrown in, but is it actually worth the high asking price?

Price: £799 Reviewer: Thomas Wellburn

Panasonic is not the most well-known company when it comes to smartphone manufacturing but it's easy to forget that it used to be a big player pre-2006. The company made the big decision to cease selling smartphones outside of its native Asia but then backtracked in 2011. The company hasn't exactly made any blistering handsets since then, so it's a welcome surprise to see it going against the grain with this one.

Little over half a year old, the Panasonic

Lumix DMC-CM1 still represents the pinnacle of smartphone photography.

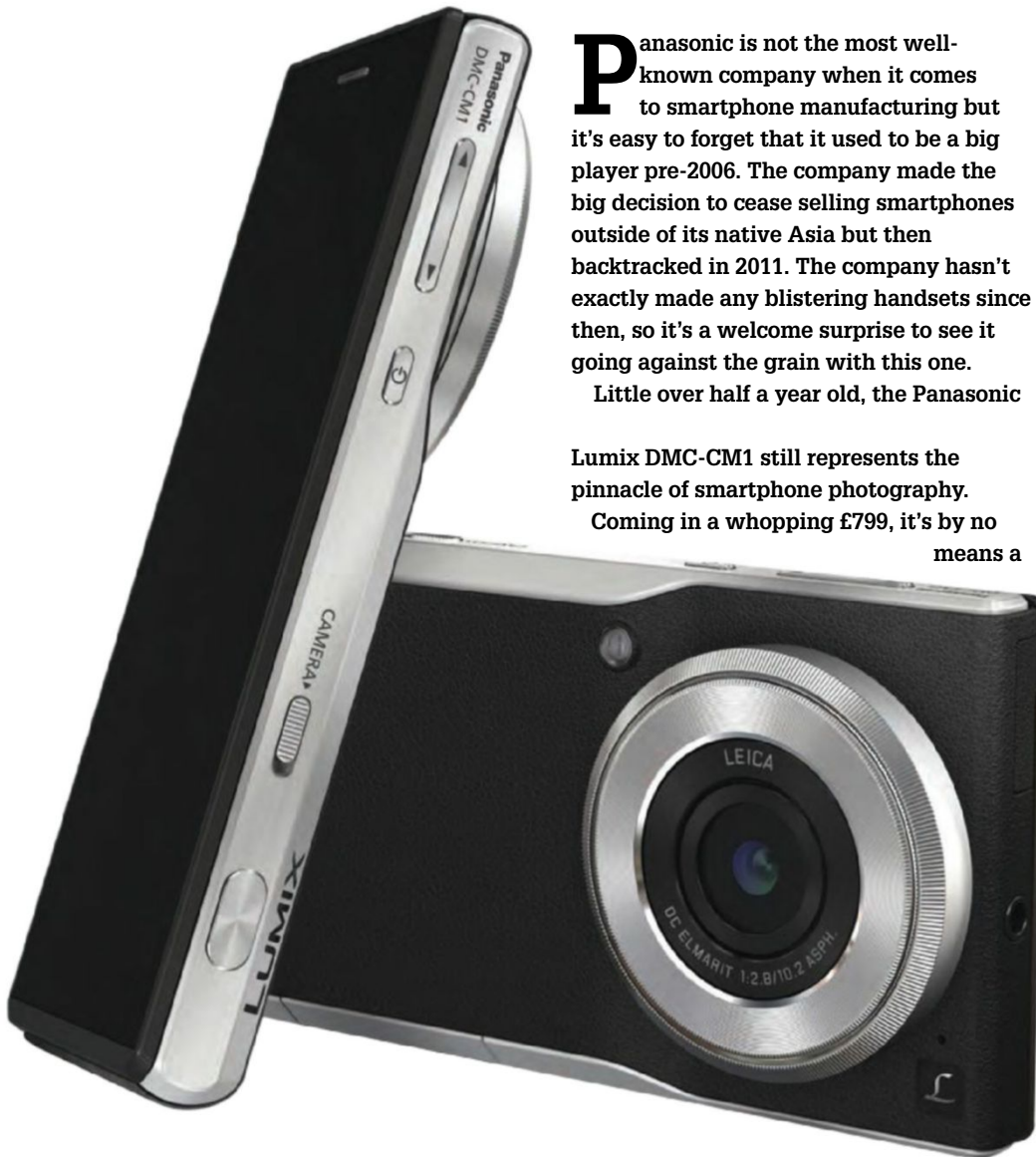
Coming in a whopping £799, it's by no means a

cheap handset. Even used, you're looking at around £600. What you get for the money is something that resembles a half-way point between camera and smartphone. Panasonic calls it a camera with a smartphone bolted on, we call it a concept demonstration that shows just what can be squeezed into a pocket-sized device. The problem is, does it have a purpose within the smartphone ecosystem? Does anybody actually have a need for such a niche device? Let's find out.

DESIGN

Make no mistake, this is pretty huge for a smartphone. While the lateral dimensions are surprisingly small and pocket-friendly, the thickness is immense. It feels like a brick, with the ginormous camera sensor protruding out of it like some all-seeing eye. It's about the same thickness as a nine-year-old Nokia N95 and that's without taking into consideration the sensor. People quite often forget just how slim smartphones have gotten in the past 10 years; this device is a prime example of it. Oddly enough, I actually grew quite fond of its slab-like thickness. The device felt incredibly snug in my palm and it was still perfectly easy to navigate the screen single handed. Carrying it around in my pocket was a different matter altogether, with the bulge in my jeans attracting some rather odd looks from passers-by.

From a design point-of-view, Panasonic has employed premium materials in an attempt to make it look more like a classic handheld



SPEC SHEET

OS Android KitKat 4.4.2 (upgradable to 5.0)
Processor 2.3 GHz Snapdragon 801
Screen 4.7-inches
Resolution 1,920 x 1,080 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes, up to 128GB

Rear camera 20MP
Front camera 1.1MP
Video 2160p (15fps only)
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 135.4 x 68 x 21.1 mm
Weight 204g
Battery 2,600mAh

AT A GLANCE

Speed	Camera	Battery
		
3 ₅	5 ₅	4 ₅



A prime example of just how great some of the photos can be

35mm camera. With its brushed metal trim and leather rear, you'll be happily reminiscing back to the days of such classics as the Pentax K1000. The front is incredibly minimal, with barely anything aside from a small front camera sensor and indicator light used for system notifications.

On the right side of the device you'll find four physical buttons, two of them dedicated to the camera functionality. Aside from the usual power and volume keys, there's also a dedicated two-phase shutter button for focusing and taking shots, plus an additional sliding unlock key for booting straight into the camera application. The left side contains both sim card and microSD slots, both of which are concealed behind a tab. Along with the hidden USB port on the top, this helps to give it a very sleek appearance.

CAMERA

Of course, the main talking point of this device is the spectacular camera on the rear. It's worth noting that the sensor protrudes slightly more than the rest of the device and doesn't have a protective cover, so you'll need to be extra careful when lugging it around. At 20 megapixels, it already beats most of the smartphones currently on the market, though it's the sensor size that makes it most impressive. The Panasonic DMC-CM1 has a 1-inch camera sensor which puts it in the same league as professional compact cameras and bridge cameras such as the Sony RX10. It's leagues ahead of your traditional compact and can even hold its own against an SLR, as demonstrated in our comparison feature on page 42.

With a wealth of manual controls on board

and RAW capture for post processing, it pretty much excels in all areas. ISO was easily usable up to 1600 in testing, producing very good low-light images. Post-processing was fairly unaggressive, with only minor detail lost in extreme cases. Daytime images were exceptional, with the variable aperture controls allowing a much greater control over depth-of-field and focus. When in manual mode, the currently selected parameter can be assigned to the lens ring on the rear of the device, giving physical control over your chosen function. It's a nice touch that is testament to Panasonic's wish to market this as a true professional photography monster. Literally the only criticism of the rear camera is the flash, which turned out to be nothing more than an LED. For a device aimed at professionals, we would really be expecting a Xenon lamp for the price.

Even the front camera was surprisingly impressive, despite being a lowly 1.1 megapixels. Images captured a good amount of detail, though there was some noise in low-light conditions. This camera would be perfectly suitable for 720p video calling and it just goes to show that megapixels don't necessarily mean everything.

SCREEN

The Panasonic Lumix DMC-CM1 features a 4.7 inch IPS panel with a resolution of 1,920 x 1,080 pixels. This equates to a density of roughly 469 pixels per inch, which is a very good number even by current standards. Although QHD screens are now becoming commonplace on flagships, this panel should be more than enough for most users. Anything over 300 PPI mostly guarantees an image that is free of pixilation and it's no exception here. There's plenty of detail to be seen and the screen is bright with excellent viewing angles.

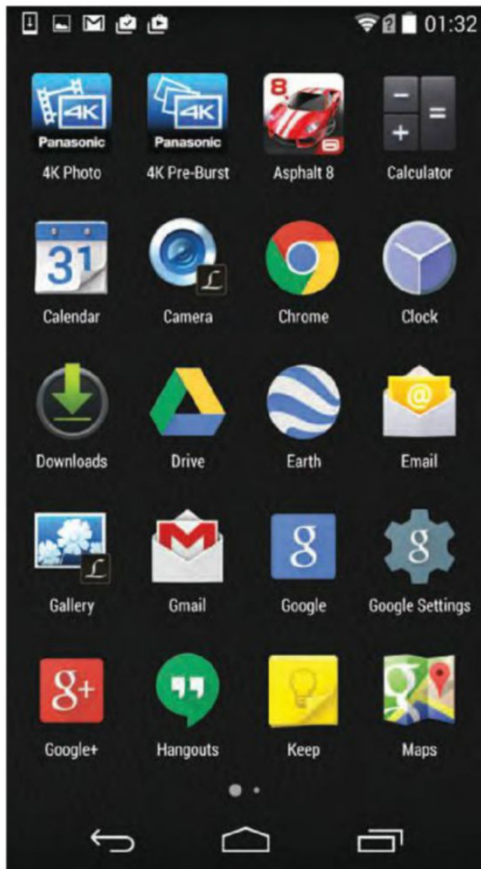
I was able to accurately focus my photographs thanks to the high pixel density and the colour reproduction of the panel translated well to my laptop display. Anyone relying on the front screen for critical information regarding colour and levels should be able to mostly rely on what they are seeing. Should you want to tweak things a little bit, there's a handy display tool in the settings that includes tint and white point adjustment. The only issue was glare in bright sunlight, which made exposure judgement a little difficult at times.

PERFORMANCE

Bearing in mind that this device released in late 2014, the Snapdragon 801 had only



Gaming was a smooth, enjoyable experience with no stuttering whatsoever



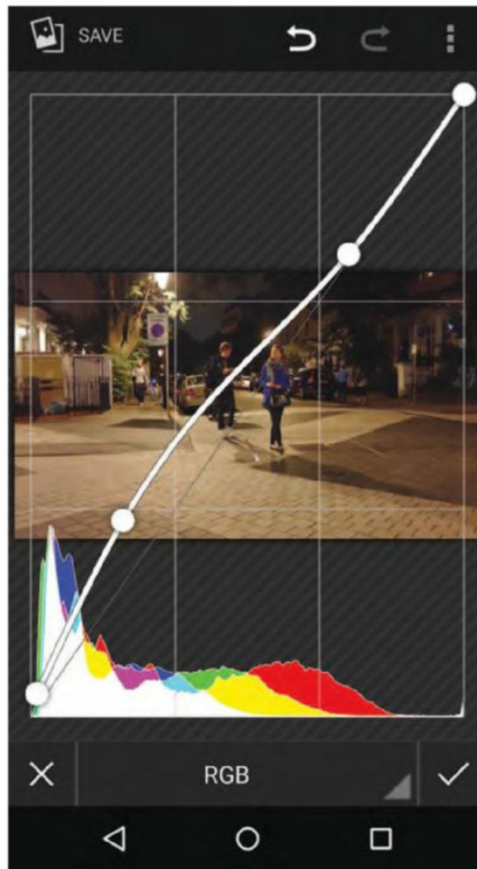
Android Lollipop is a welcome upgrade

recently been replaced with the more powerful 808 and 810. As such, it's still a suitably powerful handset even by today's standards. Aside from the top-end 8 series Snapdragon chips and their MediaTek/HiSilicon equivalents, this is still the best out there. 2GB RAM is getting a little on the low side but it's still more than suitable for moderate multitasking uses.

Playing Asphalt 8: Airborne was a hugely enjoyable experience with a smooth frame-rate even at the highest settings. Equally, browsing the UI and multitasking between applications was speedy and lag-free. After I upgraded to Android 5.0.2 Lollipop, it actually felt even faster to use. This may be a last generation device but it certainly doesn't feel like it.

VERDICT

This is by no means a cheap device but you most definitely get what you pay for. Considering when it first released, the Panasonic DMC-CM1 had flagship specifications and a true camera sensor to match even the best compact/bridge cameras. Fast forward to now and little has changed; this is still the best camera phone you can get and by quite some distance. If you've got the wallet and pocket space for it, there's no doubt that you'll be blown away by its performance.



There's plenty of tools in the gallery app

SOFTWARE

Out of the box, the handset runs on Android 4.4.2 KitKat, which is the one just before Lollipop. A free system update entitles users to the latest version of the OS and it's nice to see Panasonic still supporting the device this long after release. Those who choose to keep 4.4.2 will no doubt be fine with its performance, though version 5.0.2 offers significant enhancements and is worth the jump. You'll get the benefits of the revamped material UI plus a tasty performance boost. As far as I could tell, the Lumix DMC-CM1 runs a near stock version of the Android OS, which is an excellent decision and probably helps in part with the overall responsiveness of the phone. It still ships with a couple of

third party applications on-board, though these are pleasant additions that help to compliment the photography focused experience. The Lumix camera application is utterly fantastic and has more manual settings than you could ever imagine, while the gallery viewer features a fully-fledged photo editor complete with a full suite of professional tools.

BATTERY

The Panasonic Lumix DMC-CM1 has a good sized battery which is slightly larger than the one found in the Samsung Galaxy S6. While it can't match the 3,000mAh monsters, it has enough capacity to last a day of moderate usage. Shooting in RAW will drain the battery a bit faster, though this is to be expected. Asphalt 8 only drained it by around 10-15% after roughly 45 minutes of use, which is a pretty good figure.

For most users, it should easily last a day of moderate use. Those who are pretty intense with their multimedia and gaming may see it bring up the warning message slightly before that. The phone doesn't have a removable battery, which means you'll need to lug around a powerbar if you want to go on any overnight trips.

CONCLUSION

I'm still at loggerheads as to whether this is a camera within a smartphone or a smartphone within a camera, such is the power of that massive sensor on the back. While the price will surely make grown men weep, this phone is a thing of beauty. It has premium retro-chic styling and even with the old Snapdragon 801 processor it's still blisteringly fast. Pair that with the Android 5.0.2 update and it helps to future proof the device for at least another year. If you're a serious photography enthusiast who doesn't want to carry around a phone and SLR, there's definitely some merit to this. To the rest of use mere mortals, it appears to be nothing more than a concept design for just how awesome smartphone photography has become.

- + Incredible camera
- + Premium styling
- + Still a solid performer

- Very bulky
- Eye-wateringly expensive
- Exposed lens

OVERALL ★★★★★

PERFORMANCE



USABILITY



DESIGN



FEATURES



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AWARDS CATEGORIES

- Smartphone
- Camera phone
- Value phone
- Specialist phone
- Tablet
- Value tablet
- Manufacturer

- Network
- MVNO
- Online retailer
- High-street retailer
- Accessory retailer
- Recycling service
- Insurance provider

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Sony Xperia Z4

Light, powerful, and smooth, Sony may have got it right with this tablet

Price: £499.00 Reviewer: Joanna Tatum



Sony's barely been on the mobile device radar for the past few years, sacrificing its share of the market in favour of better profits for its under-performing Sony Mobile division. While Sony's higher-model Xperia smartphones

tend to sell well, sales have been dropping off in the last year or so, leaving the division with little profit and greater losses in the past few months. With the Xperia Z4, it might be trying to turn that trend around. The Xperia Z4 is a tablet

with a processor and RAM that wouldn't look out of place on a laptop computer. Its cameras are decent quality, and it's running on the most recent Android operating system. However, its price range is far above its closest competitors, such as

SPEC SHEET

OS Android 5.0 (Lollipop)
Processor Octa-core 2.0 GHz Qualcomm Snapdragon 810, 64 bit
Screen 10.1 inches
Resolution 2,560 x 1,600-pixels
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 32GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes, up to 128GB

Rear camera 8.1MP
Front camera 5.1MP
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G, Wi-Fi
Dimensions 167 x 254 x 6.1 mm
Weight 393g
Battery 6,000 mAh

AT A GLANCE

Speed



4/5

Camera

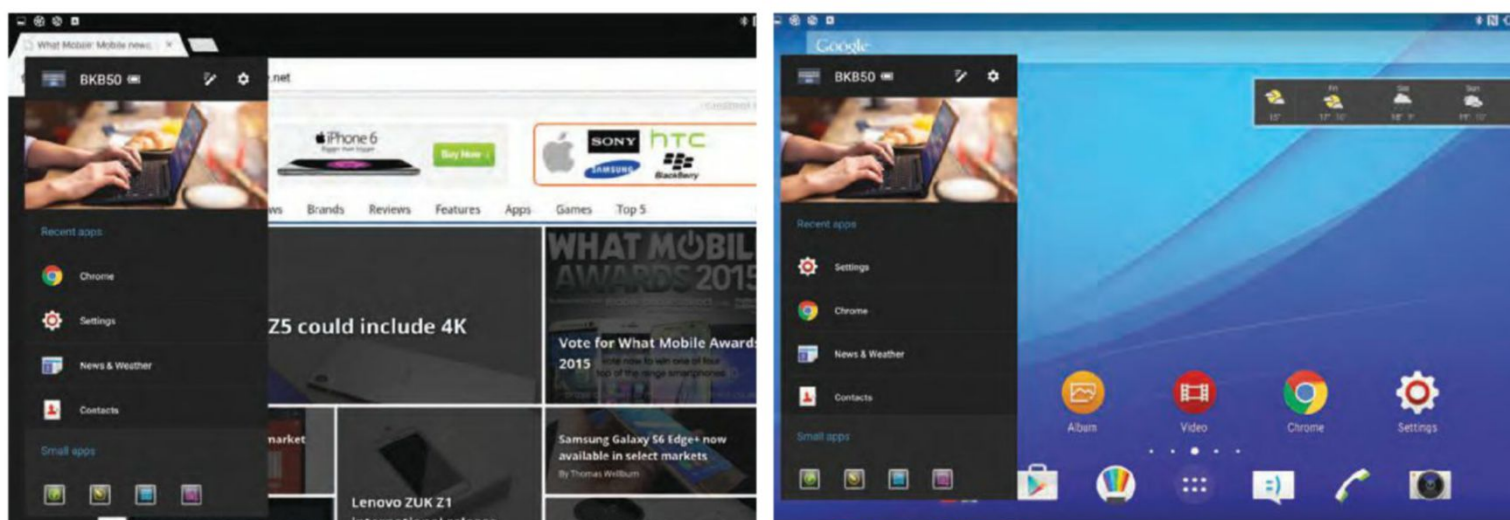


4/5

Battery



4/5



The Z4 is packed with the usual collection of in-built Android apps

The screen offers sharp resolution with crisp colour reproduction

Samsung's Galaxy Tab S or the iPad Air 2.

DESIGN

The main gimmick here, following in the steps of earlier Sony devices, is that the phone is waterproof and nearly one hundred percent dust-resistant as long as all ports are closed and you dry out the micro USB socket afterwards. Well, as long as you stick to freshwater, no deeper than 1.5 metres, and don't leave it there for more than half an hour. Good news: there's finally a tablet that you can read in the bath or shower. Bad news: it might be too slippery to hold on to. You can even take it swimming in a chlorinated pool as long as you rinse it afterwards, but whatever you do don't take it into the sea.

The breathtakingly slim design, at only 6.1mm thick, is a little bland in a market glutted with flat black screens of various sizes, but has all the usual features. Weighing less than 400g, it's only two-thirds of the weight of some competitors without sacrificing functionality.

With just enough curve at the corners to stop you cutting yourself on sharp edges, Sony has packed a 10.1 inch screen into the Z4. It also appears to have worked out that most people tend to use their tablets in landscape mode, and sensibly put the front camera in the middle of the long edge. The flash and charging/notification light are hidden in the bezel at the top, and are difficult to spot unless they're on. Along the short side – to the left, if you happen to have the logo the right way up – are the small silver on/off button and the volume control.

Along the top edge, a little to the left of the camera, a clip-on cover hides the nano-SIM and MicroSD ports nearly invisibly. At the far left, the headphone jack fits smoothly into the corner and its positioning means that it's unlikely to start digging into your leg. On the right-hand side is the standard micro-USB charging and data transfer port.

On the back, the camera sits at the top of the right edge, smoothly inlaid into the matte cover. Only the glassy smoothness of the lens differentiates it as the height of the camera lens matches the level of the cover.

The Xperia Z4 is available in black and white.

KEYBOARD

The keyboard that comes boxed with the Xperia Z4 turns the tablet into a tiny laptop, and a good one. The hinges are so sturdy that you may be worried about breaking the keyboard attempting to open it up, but it does move under firm pressure. The slot that the tablet fits into is lined with rubber grips, which will hold the keyboard in place even if held upside down. The keyboard is also as ultra-thin and lightweight as the tablet itself, with the two paired together being little thicker than an iPad 4.

Set-up is simple; you flick the switch on the right-hand side of the keyboard to activate its bluetooth connection, then switch on the Bluetooth on the tablet and tell it to connect. It only takes a few seconds to link the two together, and the keyboard-to-tablet interface is instant. There's no delay between tapping a key and the character popping up onscreen, and it keeps up with high-speed typing.

As soon as the keyboard is activated, a

row of Google apps pop up along the bottom in the same area that a PC's quick-launch tray would be, with a little arrow symbol where you'd expect the main menu. The mouse cursor appearing onscreen fosters the illusion of the mini-laptop, although the screen is still fully touch-controllable as well.

The keyboard is a full laptop-style QWERTY model, with the usual function keys that interface smoothly with the Z4's settings. The keys are a little smaller than the traditional full-sized computer keyboard, but the designers have sensibly gone with making the keys wider than they are high in a brave attempt to make it accessible to those with wider fingers.

The keyboard is far easier to use than the on-screen touch keypad, and has the added advantage of allowing you to angle the screen comfortably to prevent potential



The rear camera is superb at close-ups



A manual setting allows you to adjust the brightness and scene type depending on what you are filming or photographing

neck-ache.

While small, the keyboard is surprisingly easy to adjust to. The return key is one long horizontal bar rather than the familiar near-vertical angular version, but it doesn't take long to adapt to using it.

CAMERA

The Xperia Z4 boasts an 8.1 megapixel camera at the back of the tablet and a 5.1MP camera at the front. The rear camera is superb at close-ups and middle distance, bringing the images in sharp and clear,

but it suffers when digital zoom is applied. Very few mobile devices have good digital zooms; while the Z4 tries its hardest, zooming in further than many of its competitors, the focus fails to compensate and leaves you with blurry images.

On the bright side, the tablet does have a manual setting that allows you to adjust the brightness and scene type depending on what you're filming or photographing. If the default Superior Auto mode isn't quite giving you the scene you want, Manual gives you enough control over your screen

to get a better shot.

The front camera, which is centred on the long side, adjusts to lighting changes well and has the usual ability to pick faces out of the picture. It's far easier to take landscape-oriented face photos with the Z4's camera, but it's very tricky to take portrait selfies as angling the screen towards you moves half of your face off the screen.

The image quality is good enough to catch individual hairs and every detail of your expression, which is all you can ask of a selfie cam. There are the standard timer options and a couple of focus modes (HDR, image stabiliser, Soft Skin effect) for different situations.

If you're still not happy with your photo after taking it, Photo Editor, Photos or other apps can be used to add filters, mirror, rotate or even draw on your photo if you feel like it.

The Xperia Z4's video function takes good, smooth, HD footage, which focuses fast enough to manage moving objects with flair. It operates equally well under natural and artificial light, although it's likely that it would operate best in bright sunlight.

SCREEN

The screen of the Xperia Z4 is crisp in its colour reproduction and has good, sharp image resolution. With 10.1 inches of screen, even fine details are easily visible, and with its 16:9 screen ratio you're not in any danger of losing the sides of webpages or pictures off the side of the screen.

Sony is famous for its Bravia TVs, and it's clear that the research for Bravia influenced the design of the screen.

The screen sensitivity is excellent, responding to even light touches quickly,





The ultra thin and lightweight keyboard that comes boxed with the Xperia Z4 turns the tablet into a tiny laptop, and a good one at that

but

clever enough to know when you're swiping and when you actually intend to load an app.

PERFORMANCE

The Xperia Z4's high-end Qualcomm Snapdragon 810 2GHz processor and 3GB of memory rarely falter when running apps, loading them swiftly and cleanly, and providing fast response even when resource-hungry games and other programs are drawing heavily on the hardware's capabilities.

There were no problems with the game tests, and YouTube played music and video clearly and without hesitation. While Chrome seems entirely comfortable with having a dozen pages open at once, it does seem to have the occasional issue with web pages that contain a lot of adverts or widgets. One website with both nearly crashed Chrome during tests.

Overall, however, the Xperia Z4 had very little trouble in handling any demands made of it. The battery performance is also surprisingly robust given that its 6,000mAH battery is smaller than many in equivalent tablets, but it would be a good idea to carry a micro-USB charger cable with you if you

intend to carry it all day.

SOFTWARE

The Xperia Z4 runs on the Android 5.0.2 (Lollipop) operating system. It's packed with the usual collection of in-built Android apps, including the standard selection of Google apps and some of Sony's own Xperia bloatware. Interestingly, despite the Bluetooth keyboard which comes included in the box, there's no note-taking app already installed. The closest alternate is Google Drive, which is not always an option if you end up somewhere that you don't have an internet connection.

What it does have, however, is some of Sony's own basic apps, including a fun little program called Sketch that lets you paint basic pictures or play with downloadable 'sticker' packs. Probably intended to keep children occupied rather than be a serious tool for adult artists, it's nonetheless

an easy time-waster. We managed to throw together a crude landscape painting in 15 minutes.

Sony also appears to expect that you'll want or own a Playstation, as its PSN app is one of the five quick-access default apps on the main screen along with Music, (Photo) Album, Video and the essential Settings. Fortunately, as with most Android devices, it's easy to edit the home screen to match your preferences with a few simple press and drag movements.



VERDICT

The Sony Xperia Z4 is a beautifully engineered tablet with more than enough power to run even the most demanding app smoothly. Unfortunately, while slimline and lightweight, its listed price of £499.00 is surprisingly high for its provided specifications. Powerful but pricey.

- + Crystal clear HD display
- + Sensitive touchscreen
- + Excellent performance
- Very expensive for its specs
- Design is boring
- Small battery for its size

OVERALL ★★★★★

PERFORMANCE

★★★★★

DESIGN

★★★★★

USABILITY

★★★★★

FEATURES

★★★★★

LG G4c

A solid example of a mid-range phone, the LG G4c could be worse... but it could be better

Price: £229.99 Reviewer: Joanna Tatum

LG is the fifth biggest smartphone manufacturer in the world and it's currently competing with Huawei for fourth place after having been outpaced by the Chinese company. The Korean company has been in the smartphone market since the early 2000s and has been releasing new phones on a steady basis since then. LG has been trying to improve since the Optimus embarrassment a few years ago, and it seems to be just about treading water in the market. At first glance, the LG G4c is a solidly mid-range smartphone, with a solidly mid-range price of £229.99. The hardware, software, camera and design are all good but lack that last little touch that would mark them excellent. It's in at about the same price range as the Sony Xperia M4 Aqua or the HTC Desire 860, and while it's a little more expensive than the Samsung Galaxy J5, which is close to its specs, it's notably cheaper than the Apple 5c. So, how does the LG G4c shape up?

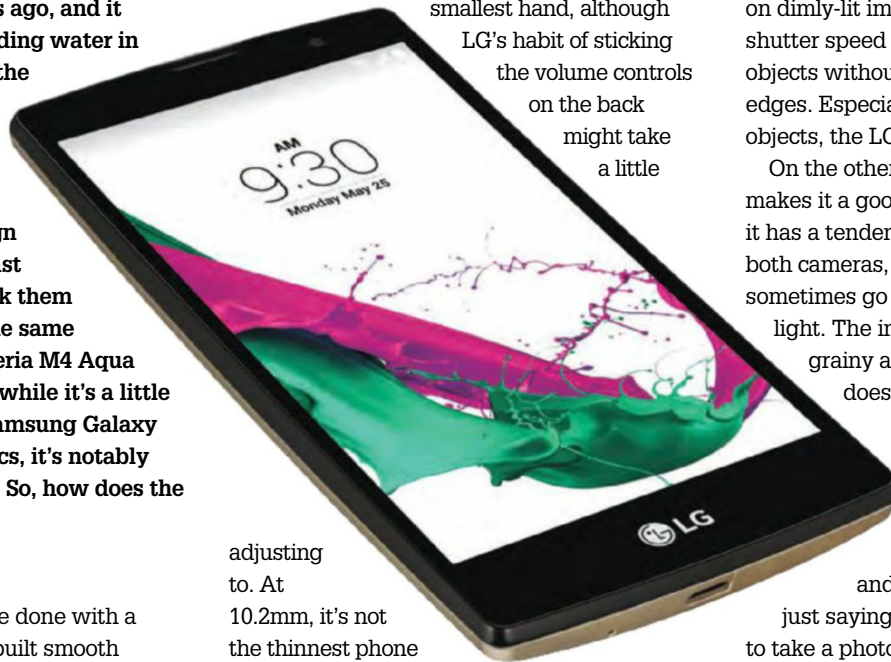
DESIGN

There's not much that can be done with a black rectangle but LG has built smooth curves into the top and bottom edges of the G4c, saving it from being a plain black tile. It's sleek and simple, with only the speaker and the offset camera at the top along with a notification LED and proximity sensor that blend invisibly into the background. The LG logo sits where buttons would be on other phones. In this model, LG has opted for full

touchscreen, no buttons except for the ones on the back.

Turning it over, there's a rather elegant metallic matte crosshatch pattern on the plastic back, with the camera centred at the top above the on/off and volume control buttons. Lower down, next to the logo, there's another speaker.

The 5-inch screen fits nicely into even the smallest hand, although LG's habit of sticking the volume controls on the back might take a little



adjusting to. At 10.2mm, it's not the thinnest phone on the market but it doesn't really need to be. It's far from being a brick.

To get to the micro SIM card or micro SD card, it's necessary to take the cover off the back, which fortunately snaps on and off easily. The SD card slot is stacked over the top of the SIM in an interesting attempt at space-saving.

The LG G4c is available in three colours: Metallic Grey, Ceramic White and Shiny Gold.

CAMERA

The LG G4c has a mid-range 8 megapixel rear camera and a 5 megapixel front camera. The auto-focus on the rear camera shines when used on medium-to-close objects in decent lighting, and has a surprisingly good handle on dimly-lit images. It also has a fast enough shutter speed to take good pictures of moving objects without blurring too much at the edges. Especially good with smooth, shiny objects, the LG G4c takes decent home photos.

On the other hand, the very thing that makes it a good low-light camera means that it has a tendency to produce darker images on both cameras, and its handling of contrast can sometimes go overboard into intense dark and light. The images can also turn out slightly grainy and pixellated, as the rear camera doesn't cope well with sharp edges.

The front camera is offset, so you'll need to adjust the camera before taking a selfie. Selfie-taking is made fun by the LG G4c's voice activation and gesture shot abilities, when

just saying "Cheese!" will tell the camera to take a photo. There's no more need to worry about button and finger coordination when in a group of friends. Gesture shot follows your hand signal to take either one photo, or four in a row. And LG has done away with the flash at the front, instead turning the entire screen into one big camera flash.

The video function allows you to take HD video, which comes out clear and bright as

SPEC SHEET

OS Android
Processor Quad-core 1.3 GHz Qualcomm Snapdragon
Screen 5.0 inches
Resolution 720 x 1,280-pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes, up to 128GB

Rear camera 8MP
Front camera 5MP
Video 1,080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 139.7 x 69.9 x 10.2 mm
Weight 139g
Battery 2,540 mAh

AT A GLANCE

Speed



3/5

Camera



3/5

Battery



3/5



Photos have a tendency to be dark and grainy



The G4C will show HD pictures and video with no difficulty

long as you don't move too quickly. There's little if any shake compensation, so you'll need either steady hands or a small tripod.

The still photos can be edited after in Google's Photo app, with the usual range of filters and adjustments available so that you can get the best out of your images.

SCREEN

The LG G4c's 5-inch screen is crisp, clear, and colour-perfect. One of the best things about this phone, it'll show HD pictures and video with no difficulty, to the limit of the image's pixels. The bezel around the edge is relatively wide for a modern phone, which means that it's possible that LG could have fitted a 5.2 inch screen into the space available. Still, it's a matter of taste as to whether you do or don't mind having a frame around the display.

PERFORMANCE

Under ordinary circumstances, the performance of the 1.3Ghz quad-core processor is good. The apps load quickly, and respond fast when called on. The processor runs music and video without hesitation, even when it's high quality, though it's possible that full-length movies may need a few extra seconds of buffering. With 8GB of

hard drive storage and a potential extra 128GB on a MicroSD card, you'll have space to store plenty of music and video.

Unfortunately, it falls down when called on to handle high-performance games. With only 1GB of memory, it can take a while to load games that demand a lot out of the graphics processor and gameplay can be jerky.

Still, if you aren't planning to play racing games on your phone, this won't matter given that the LG G4c is fully up to handling the day-to-day demands of the average user.

With all that running, the 2,540 mAh mid-to-high-range battery performs well with the demands made of it. Its standby mode holds up better than some more expensive models, although playing resource-hungry games or constant video are likely to drain the battery quickly. In standard use, however, it'll last out the day without needing to be recharged.

SOFTWARE

The LG G4c runs on Android Lollipop, which functions well on the phone's architecture. The lock screen can be swiped in any direction to open, with a fun ripple effect clearing away the lock screen to reveal the active page underneath.

Once cleared, it reveals the standard

Android main screen or whatever you've left running. Phone, Contacts, the App button, Internet, and Messaging are arrayed along the bottom of the screen, and below that are the touchscreen versions of Back, Main Screen and See All Open Apps. Above are stacked the most common and most recently downloaded apps – the Google folder, Email, Google Play Store, Camera, and Settings. Above that is the usual stack of widgets that can be added or removed to personalise your home screen.



The 5-inch screen is crisp and clear

VERDICT

The LG G4c is solidly average, with a few fun gimmicks that don't quite make up for the photo quality. For those who simply want a day-to-day workhorse, it's not a bad option, but it's not for those who are looking for something heavy-duty.

- + Fantastically clear display
- + Gorgeous design
- + Decent battery life

- Photos can be dark and grainy
- Struggles to run high-demand apps
- A little pricey for its specs

OVERALL ★★★★★

PERFORMANCE

★★★★★

DESIGN

★★★★★

USABILITY

★★★★★

FEATURES

★★★★★

HTC Desire 626

HTC is back with a refresh to its budget Desire line. Will it prove to be a worthwhile purchase, or is just a rush job from an under-fire smartphone manufacturer?

Price: £150.00 Reviewer: Thomas Wellburn



DESIGN

The HTC Desire 626 is an attractive looking smartphone. With a colourful polycarbonate shell and contrast trim around the camera sensor and edges, it definitely stands out among the boring, block colours of similar handsets. The matte finish does a decent job of blocking out unwanted fingerprints, though they'll still manage to crop up after periods of long usage. From the front, you could even be forgiven for thinking it was an off-shoot of the flagship One series, such is the familiar design characteristics.

With an

overall thickness of only 8.2mm, it's also pleasingly thin in the hand. The curved edges give a nice smooth grip to it and there won't be any sharp corners digging into the palms of your hands. It's definitely on the large side at almost 15cm in height, which is quite noticeable when you consider the amount of dead space above and below the panel. Most of that space is used to house the two giant speakers which have become a mainstay on recent HTC devices. Oddly, only the bottom one is actually used in

the Desire 626, with the top one being nothing more than a dummy grille.

On the left side you get volume keys and a power button which both have a sturdy, satisfying click but no dedicated camera shutter. The opposite side has a flap which reveals the sim tray (two if you have the dual-sim version) and microSD slot which is expandable up to an eye-watering 512GB. Unfortunately, the rear case is non-removable, meaning there's no way to replace the battery when you're on the move.

CAMERA

The cameras on this device both have very high megapixel counts considering the price, though that doesn't necessarily mean better performance. At 13 megapixels, the rear camera is a decent all-round performer. Daytime pictures that possess plenty of dynamic range came out a little overexposed, while fine detail could be better. Thankfully, there's a reasonable amount of manual settings to help deal with those pesky exposure issues. Low-light was good, capturing a relatively noise-free image at high ISO's that retained a fair amount of detail. Things were a little soft when viewed up close but it's still a solid effort overall.

With a 5 megapixel front camera, you would expect it to be excellent for taking selfies. Unfortunately, that's not quite true. The HTC Desire 626 has a very disappointing front-facing camera considering the high expectations. There's little in the way of fine detail and the overall image is incredibly soft. I can't tell if it's a case of aggressive noise reduction or if the camera sensor is just plain

HTC made a shock announcement earlier this year by announcing a refresh to its line of mid-range Desire smartphones. With the HTC Desire 620 less than a year old, that's a quick turnover with regards to technology cycles. This new HTC Desire 626 improves on the original in quite a few areas, though others remain completely unchanged. Can it do enough to truly separate itself from its predecessor?

SPEC SHEET

OS Android 5.1
Processor 1.2 GHz quad-core Snapdragon 410
Screen 5.0-inches
Resolution 1,280 x 720 pixels
Memory 2 GB RAM
Storage 16 GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes, up to 512GB

Rear camera 13MP
Front camera 5MP
Video 1,080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 147 x 71 x 8.2 mm
Weight 135g
Battery 2,000mAh

AT A GLANCE

Speed



3/5

Camera



3/5

Battery



3/5



The rear 13 megapixel camera is a decent all-round performer

bad. Either way, it's a poor showing considering the megapixel count.

SCREEN

The HTC Desire 626 has a 5-inch HD IPS panel, which has excellent viewing angles and good colour reproduction. With a resolution of 1,280 x 720 pixels, this equates to a pixel density of roughly 294 per inch. This sits just below the 300 PPI standard, meaning jagged edges are practically non-existent. At normal viewing distances, you'll be hard-pressed to see anything. Even up close, icons remain sharp but still manage to avoid any sort of pixelation.

One thing worth noting is that the overall brightness of the panel isn't that great, making it difficult to see in some lighting conditions. Even turning the setting up to maximum and disabling the ambient light sensor made little difference, as it simply couldn't reach the levels seen in other devices. Those who use their devices in bright conditions will need to be aware of this.

PERFORMANCE

Inside, there's a 1.2 GHz Snapdragon 410 processor, which is the same chip as previously seen in the LG Spirit. This time around though, the HTC is packing an extra 1GB RAM. Performance is perfectly

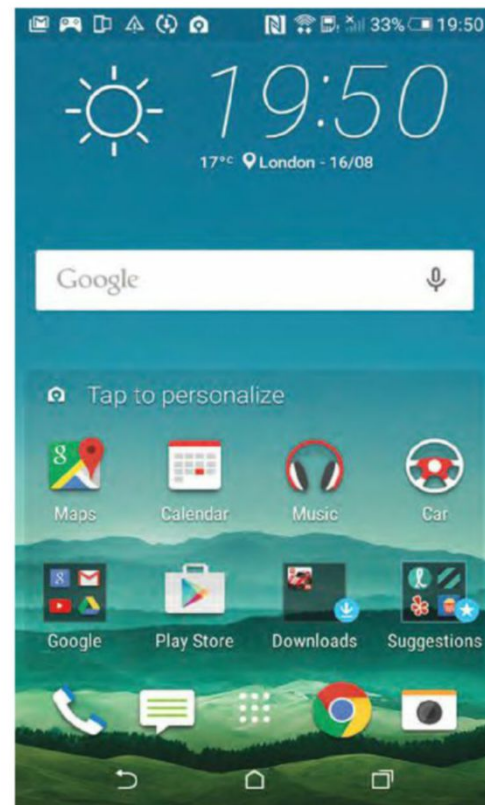
acceptable, with apps opening fairly quickly and UI navigation consistently fast. Load up several apps and things start to slow a little, but the extra RAM definitely makes a difference in overall multitasking speeds.

My usual benchmarking game of Asphalt 8: Airborne performed on the HTC Desire 626 much like others with similar specifications – decent but hardly mind-blowing. Turning the settings up to max, the game was clearly running in the sub-30 FPS levels. I'm sure most people could happily play it at such speeds and it never got to the point where the frame rate was intrusively choppy, though dialling the graphics back to 'normal' definitely made things much smoother.

Battery life is acceptable, with a solid 30 minutes of gaming only draining around 8-10% of its capacity. For moderate users, you should be able to get a day's usage out of it before needing to recharge. The lack of a removable battery is a hindrance, especially when out travelling for long periods. Those who enjoy carrying a spare will definitely miss this feature.

SOFTWARE

The HTC Desire 626 runs on the latest version of Android 5.1 and includes the custom HTC Sense version 7 launcher. This new version of



The Desire 626 includes the Sense launcher

Sense is very similar to the previous releases, with only subtle changes to keep the design aesthetic in line with Android Lollipop. Various widgets, quick settings and controls have been slightly altered, with navigation controls now fully customisable. There's a big emphasis on customisation, with the Themes app letting the user change just about anything on their device. There's also a new Sense Home option, which allows app management based on your location.

Android Lollipop continues to go from strength to strength, once again showing a vast performance improvement on lower-end hardware. The days of 'Lagdroid' are most definitely behind us. Version 5.1 adds a few subtle tweaks and refinements such as better security and dual-sim support, though the general OS remains much the same. If you liked the material design before, you're going to be more than happy here.

VERDICT

The HTC Desire 626 is a solid handset that performs fine in most areas. Should you decide to purchase one, it will likely serve you very well under most conditions. The only problem arises from the £150 retail price, which puts it squarely in the firing line of budget superstars such as the Vodafone Smart Ultra 6. Had HTC priced it slightly cheaper, it may well have been worth more serious consideration. As it is, there are better deals out there. Still, this is a perfectly capable phone.

- + Attractive design
- + Decent rear camera
- + 2GB RAM
- Poor front camera
- Non-removable battery
- Screen could be brighter

OVERALL ★★★★★

PERFORMANCE

★★★★★

DESIGN

★★★★★

USABILITY

★★★★★

FEATURES

★★★★★

Acer M220

A budget Windows Phone that isn't a Microsoft handset? Can this simple little device compete with the bargains being churned out by the Redmond software giant?

Price: £55.00 Reviewer: Thomas Wellburn



It's tough being a non-Microsoft handset in a Windows Phone world. The company has inadvertently put a stranglehold on its own OS, producing solid handsets across the entire line that often undercut the competition. This makes outside manufacturers a little weary about developing for the platform, which already sees far less returns to investment versus iOS and Android. Acer is quite

brave going in at the deep end, with the Lumia 435 already securing the bargain-bin sector as a fully featured device that can be had for as little as forty quid. On paper it should give it a run for its money, exceeding in some areas while falling behind in others.

SPEC SHEET

OS Windows Phone 8.1
Processor 1.2GHz dual-core Snapdragon 200
Screen 4.0-inches
Resolution 800 x 480 pixels
Memory 512 MB RAM
Storage 4GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes, up to 32GB

Rear camera 5MP
Front camera 2MP
Video 854 x 580
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 125 x 64 x 9.6 mm
Weight 119g
Battery 1,300 mAh

DESIGN

With a screen size of only 4.0 inches, it's a cute little thing to be sure. There's a lack of dedicated camera controls, which is to be expected at this price point, though you can still use the on-screen buttons to snap a pic. It sits in the hand well and is very easy to grip thanks to the textured rear finish. With a thickness of only 9.6mm, it's also considerably thinner than most other smartphones in this price-point.

The plastic case somewhat resembles faux leather, though it feels a bit cheap in places. There's also quite a bit of dead space on the front panel, which makes the screen seem smaller than it actually is. Acer could've easily squeezed some capacitive buttons on there, though it would've no doubt bumped the price up quite considerably.

Despite the nit-picking, the overall design is pretty good it definitely looks more expensive than the retail price suggests. Removing the cover reveals the 1,300mAh battery, sim tray and microSD slot (which you'll definitely be needing).

CAMERA

One area where Acer has really splashed the cash is in the photography department. With a 5 megapixel rear and 2 megapixel front camera, it's a massive improvement over the Lumia 435 and its poor 2 megapixel rear shooter. The pictures from the device have a good amount of detail and less noise than expected. Low-light is a bit of an issue but this is a budget phone after all. I was also surprised by the video quality, which is above VGA but below HD. The results are very good

AT A GLANCE

Speed



2/5

Camera



3/5

Battery



2/5



The screen on the M220 is disappointing

and much better than anything else at this price.

Front camera are nearly always neglected on budget devices, with the image quality ranging from bad to terrible. The Acer bucks this trend by throwing in a very capable selfie shooter. The image quality is perfectly acceptable and it should be more than usable for the odd video call, which isn't something I usually say for phones costing double the price.

SCREEN

I never expect miracles from low-end devices but the screen on this device is pretty bad. After a promising showing from the camera, it's disappointing that the panel lets it down so badly. It suffers from some of the worst viewing angles I've ever seen and that's after taking into consideration that it's a cheap TN panel. Colours will warp at the slightest turn and at anything less than maximum brightness, it is simply impossible to make

anything out. The only option is to hold the phone dead central with your line-of-sight, which is both inconvenient and very difficult.

The resolution is also low at only 800 x 480 pixels. Granted, this matches the Lumia 435 but I don't remember the pixilation being half as evident on that panel. Jagged edges are everywhere and clearly viewable at normal distances. Even the colour reproduction fails to excite, with a dull palette that can probably be attributed to the poor viewing angles. Windows Phone usually looks great on low resolution panels but even the OS can't help this one.

PERFORMANCE

The device uses a 1.2 GHz Snapdragon 200 processor, which is the same processor found in the Lumia 435 we reviewed previously. Whereas things were fairly smooth on the Lumia, the Acer seems slightly slower under general browsing. That said, the UI still feels very fluid and only really shows its shortcomings when opening larger apps.

The storage is a bit of an oddity on this device, with only 4GB internal memory. We realise this is done to keep the ultra-low price point but when the OS alone takes up 2.6GB of memory, it seems like a bit of a bottleneck. It renders the phone practically un-usable unless you purchase a microSD card. There's also no 4G support, which could be an issue for those wanting the fastest mobile speeds possible

Gaming was hit-and-miss due to the device only having 512MB RAM. Most Windows games won't run on anything less than 1GB, though I did manage to get Halo: Spartan Assault working. Performance was fluid with only occasional frame-rate drops. Battery life is okay at 1,300mAh though it never quite lasted as long when compared with the Lumia 435. Even so, I was able to get a solid day of use before the warning message popped up.

SOFTWARE

The Acer M220 uses the latest version of Windows Phone 8.1 but it doesn't get any of



The camera improves on the Lumia 435

the treats usually found on Lumia devices. It's almost able to match Android and iOS when it comes to the core functionalities, although it's fair to say that some of those are not quite as robust versus the competition.

The experience is mostly seamless on the Acer, which is a testament to its optimisation on lower-end hardware. Apps hang a little when they initially load but it's a minor niggle when you consider the hardware. The app store is still pretty woeful with a poor selection of Triple-A third party applications, though it has gotten a lot better than when the OS was first announced.

While the jury is still out on which non-Microsoft devices will get the upgrade to Windows 10 Mobile, I would be surprised if the Acer M220 is included on the list. With only 512MB RAM, it doesn't meet the recommended specifications of 1GB or more. That said, at this price point it's highly likely most people won't be purchasing the device with that in mind.

VERDICT

Although the Acer M220 was once the cheapest Windows Phone device you could buy, the Lumia 435 has slowly trickled down in price and can now be found for much cheaper. Although the camera is great and I'm actually really fond of the design, it's difficult to recommend this over the Microsoft equivalent because of important omissions such as 4G and a lack of suitable storage space.

- + Mostly fluid experience
- + Decent camera
- + Solid design
- Terrible screen
- No 4G
- Lack of storage

OVERALL ★★★★★

PERFORMANCE

★★★★★

DESIGN

★★★★★

USABILITY

★★★★★

FEATURES

★★★★★

DATA USAGE

JUST HOW MUCH DO YOU NEED?

Data allowance is the bane of existence for many smartphone users. Ofcom states that 67% of 4G smartphone users regularly use mobile apps more than once per week, which is a lot of data. If you're running those which communicate within the background, you could even be eating data without realising. Providers have steadily increased their allowances, with Three now offering all-you-can-eat data on select plans, though they are hardly cheap. The lowest all-you-can-eat data plan comes in

at £17 per month and only gives you 200 minutes. This is fine for VOIP calls but less than ideal when traditional cellular calls are needed.

Provider help

Knowing how much data you actually need is also a major pain, with phone providers less than helpful on the fine details. Some networks such as EE offer a data calculator on their website, which allows you to dial in estimated usage figures and

see a suggested readout for how much data they need. However, these are pretty inaccurate and tend to take into account general usage figures. Those who enjoy high quality video and audio streaming may find themselves reaching the limit far faster than someone who uses the basic 128 kbps Spotify package. We've included a basic table that reflects both light and heavy usage, just to give an example of the parallels people can face when they lose track of their browsing habits.

LIGHT USAGE

vs

HEAVY USAGE

- 113 hours general web browsing
- 319 songs (128 kbps)
- 50 minutes 45 seconds 480p video (2.5 mbps YouTube Standard quality)
- 31 minutes 40 seconds 1080p video (4 mbps YouTube Full HD quality)

1GB

- 36 hours multimedia web browsing
- 127 songs (320 kbps high quality)
- 5 minutes 45 seconds HQ 1080p video (22 mbps Blu-ray quality)

- 227 hours general web browsing
- 639 songs (128 kbps)
- 101 minutes 30 seconds 480p video (2.5 mbps YouTube Standard quality)
- 63 minutes 20 seconds 1080p video (4 mbps YouTube Full HD quality)

2GB

- 72 hours multimedia web browsing
- 255 songs (320 kbps high quality)
- 11 minutes 30 seconds 1080p video (22 mbps Blu-ray quality)





- 568 hours general web browsing
- 1,597 songs (128 kbps)
- 253 minutes 57 seconds 480p video (2.5 mbps YouTube Standard quality)
- 158 minutes 40 seconds 1080p video (4 mbps YouTube Full HD quality)

5GB

- 180 hours multimedia web browsing
- 637 songs (320 kbps high quality)
- 28 minutes 50 seconds 1080p video (22 mbps Blu-ray quality)

- 1,136 hours general web browsing
- 3195 songs (128 kbps)
- 507 minutes 54 seconds 480p video (2.5 mbps YouTube Standard quality)
- 317 minutes 20 seconds 1080p video (4 mbps YouTube Full HD quality)

10GB

- 360 hours multimedia web browsing
- 1,275 songs (320 kbps high quality)
- 57 minutes 40 seconds 1080p video (22 mbps Blu-ray quality)

SIMPLE STEPS

With most data plans floating around the 1-2GB range, it's easy to see how the average user could reach their limits. This is without even taking into account background processes, which are responsible for getting your messages and notifications on time. Of course, there's always plenty of ways to reduce data consumption if you're a little bit savvy with your smart device. As such, we've some simple ways to shave off those precious megabytes.

1 Close apps

It probably sounds obvious but you'd be surprised how many people forget the simplest of things. Leaving applications open will place them in a suspended state, which unfortunately means that they continue to consume data. Leaving multiple applications open at a time will allow you to switch between things faster but it's not the best practice.

2 Disable notifications and background apps

Applications can be allowed to run in the background even when they're closed, which means they will accept incoming notifications from other devices. Notifications mean a constant data connection, which in turn means a lot of megabytes going missing while you're unaware. Any applications you install will typically be allowed to run in background unless specified. Therefore, it's important to carefully manage what apps you need to run in the background versus those you don't care about.

3 Disable geo-location

Location data is a big drain on your allowance if you allow it to run wild within your applications. Map software, fitness apps and social networks all have the ability to track your location, which is less than ideal unless it's absolutely necessary. Not everyone needs to know that you're tweeting from a Costa Coffee near Liverpool Street, so it's probably best if you disable geo-locations for those extra few megabytes.

4 Disable auto-play on social media

It seems like almost every modern social media platform now offers the ability for videos to begin playing before you've clicked on them. It's an annoyance that sees swamps of noisy clips playing in the background as you frantically try to locate them on your timeline. Head to the appropriate application and disable auto-play to help stop the annoying vids and save you some data in the process.

5 Set data usage limits

Data usage limits are a great way to impose restrictions on those who usually exceed their monthly allowance. By setting up a maximum usage allowance equivalent to what you are supplied by your mobile provider, you will be able to coincide your data expenditure with your monthly contract renewal. This means you will never reach the limit and start getting those pesky additional charges.

6 Compress web pages

Most modern mobile browsers now have some form of web page compression built-in, which allows them to reduce the data usage during your typical surfing sessions. It's worth checking out the settings pages in popular browsers such as Chrome and Opera, plus Internet Explorer if you're a Windows Phone user.

THAT WILL DO NICELY

What Mobile breaks down the muddle of mobile phone payment

What is NFC?

NFC, or near field communication, is a way of making your mobile phone or credit/debit card talk to card machines or contact points in shops so that you can pay for goods with a single tap. It's called near field communication because your phone or card doesn't even need to touch the reader to transfer the data.

How does it work?

A special electronic chip in your phone, bank card or SIM card lets you securely transfer the money across to the reader. The readers usually double as card payment machines, since contactless payment is the same whether you're using your card or your phone. While contactless cards like Visa or MasterCard are becoming more common, it's rarer to find the newly launched mobile phone NFC pay systems in use. Apple Pay and EE's Cash on Tap are two of the biggest names in the NFC payment game.

Did You Know? London's Oyster card system uses NFC! Every time someone taps an Oyster card on the big yellow contact button, the card communicates with the Underground's computer system to tell it where the passenger started, where they exited, and how much to charge. Clever, huh?

Where can I use it?

Only a few places have Apple Pay or EE Cash on Tap right now, but it has the potential to grow considerably. As it uses the same methods as contactless card payment, which has been rolling out all over the country for the past few years, it's possible for a shop to add Apple Pay or EE Cash on Tap without changing any hardware. Right now, places you can use them both include Pret a Manger, McDonald's, Boots, M&S, and TFL (aka London Bus or the London Underground). Apple also has a long, although not exhaustive, list of more places where you can use Apple Pay on its website. If you really want to know

if your local shop accepts Apple Pay, though, the best thing is to ask.

How much can I spend?

Just like contactless cards, mobile NFC is limited to a maximum of £20 per transaction — although that limit may be going up to £30 across the board in the future.

Is my SIM is capable of contactless payment?

All SIM cards that can handle NFC are marked with an N. However, it's worth noting that this only applies to SIM-based payment systems like EE's Cash on Tap. If your payment system is phone-based like Apple Pay, it doesn't matter what kind of SIM card you have in your phone.



If you don't have an NFC-capable sim for EE's Cash on Tap, you can request one from EE's website.

WHICH DEVICES CAN USE NFC?

Good question! At the moment, EE's Cash on Tap is doing a lot better with the number of devices that can handle NFC. They're also likely to have increasing numbers in the future as manufacturers start including NFC as part of the phone. However, you can use Apple Pay with the Apple Watch,

which means that you don't even need to get your phone out to buy something. That's pretty impressive. Not to mention that the Apple iPhone 6 has been a top seller for the past year, so there's plenty of them out there.

Compatible Devices

Apple Pay

iPhone 6 - iPhone 6+ - Apple Watch - iPad Air 2 - iPad Mini 3

EE Cash on Tap

Samsung Galaxy S6 - Samsung Galaxy S6 edge - Samsung Galaxy S5 - Samsung Galaxy S5 Mini - Samsung Galaxy S4 - Samsung Galaxy S4 Mini - Samsung Galaxy S3 LTE - Samsung Galaxy Note 3 - Samsung Galaxy Note 2 - Samsung Galaxy Alpha - Sony Xperia Z3 - Sony Xperia Z3 Compact - Sony Xperia Z2 - Sony Xperia Z1 - Sony Xperia Z1 Compact - Sony Xperia SP - Sony Xperia M2 - HTC One - HTC One Mini 2

	Apple Pay	EE Cash on Tap
Which banks/ card issuers support it?	Now American Express, First Direct, HSBC, MBNA, Nationwide Building Society, NatWest, Royal Bank of Scotland, Santander, Ulster Bank Coming soon Bank of Scotland, Barclays, Halifax, Lloyds Bank, M&S Bank, TSB	MasterCard / Visa *EE claims that Cash on Tap will work with any UK credit or debit card
How secure is it?	Apple requires that you enter either a fingerprint or PIN before the purchase goes through. The retailer doesn't see your name, your card number, or any other details Apple isn't told what you buy, where you buy it, how much it is, or any other personal information	EE, having partnered with MasterCard, requires a PIN number before the purchase is confirmed The retailer doesn't see your name, your card number, or any other details EE doesn't see what you spend, but MasterCard may
Where can I use it?	Anywhere you see the Contactless logo or Apple Pay symbol	Anywhere you see the Contactless logo or PayPass™ symbol
How does it work?	Relies on a special chip built into the device	Uses special SIM cards in selected phones

APP-BASED PAYMENT AND OTHER WAYS OF USING NFC

CAN I USE MY PHONE TO PAY FOR THINGS WITHOUT USING NFC?


Of course! There are plenty of apps out there that let you transfer money. Most of the major banks have their own mobile banking apps, and there are many others that let you send money to other people or to businesses. Here's a few of the best-known ones.

Google Wallet

Highly popular, Google Wallet can be used by anyone with a Gmail account. Google Wallet keeps your bank details safe, and simply uses email to transfer money between people — the recipient doesn't even need to have a Gmail account. While this won't let you buy a burger at your local fast food place, it does make it easier to pay back your friend when they've bought one for you. Transfers are free only within the UK. Google Wallet does have an NFC extension called Tap and Pay over in the

United States. However, it doesn't seem to have migrated here yet, and Google is being cagey about its release date. And it may soon be made obsolete by Android Pay.

PayPal

Once part of eBay, PayPal split off to become its own entity last year. While it has had its problems, it's still widely used to transfer money between people, both within the UK and to other countries for a fee. Once signed up, PayPal allows you to either send 

➤ money to friends or family, or pay for goods or services. All you need is the email address of the person you're sending money to.

Barclays Pingit

Barclays Pingit is a clever system that lets you send money to anyone with a UK mobile phone number, or to thousands of businesses, services, and charities. While originally designed for Barclays customers, it is open to anyone with a UK bank account and a smartphone. Once you've finished wading your way through the setup and verification process, it is quick and easy to use. Not quite as simple as tapping your phone on a card reader, but in some ways more flexible.

WILL THERE BE OTHER WAYS OF USING NFC?

Definitely. One is already active, and two others are due to launch in the United States soon.

bPay

bPay is Barclaycard's own foray into the world of contactless payment. Unlike Apple Pay and Cash on Tap, bPay doesn't need a mobile phone to get around. Instead, users can pick from a wristband, a key fob, or a sticker that all offer NFC contactless payment. However, it forces users to make a one-off payment for these devices, as the cost can't be absorbed by a phone contract or the price of the phone itself.

Android Pay

Android Pay is rumoured to be released in the United States by the time this magazine hits the shelves, but there's still no word on when or if it's likely to come to the UK. European law is tighter on security than US laws, which means that Android Pay may have to undergo some modifications before it's used on this side of the Atlantic.

Samsung Pay

Samsung Pay may be even further off than Android Pay, but it promises a whole new angle on NFC — proprietary Magnetic Secure Transmission, or MST, which suggests that Samsung Pay may somehow be able to use the older-style magnetic strip card readers in order to let people buy things in places that don't have contactless readers yet.

HOW DO I SET UP APPLE PAY?

So you want to use Apple Pay but you're not sure how? No problem! Here's the quick and easy guide to setting up Apple Pay

STEP 1

Ensure that your bank supports Apple Pay. If you belong to Barclays, Lloyds Bank, the Bank of Scotland, or the others listed as having not joined yet, you unfortunately won't be able to use your card to set up Apple Pay. If you're not sure, call your bank or check online, as things may have changes since this magazine was printed. Otherwise, on to Step 2.

STEP 2

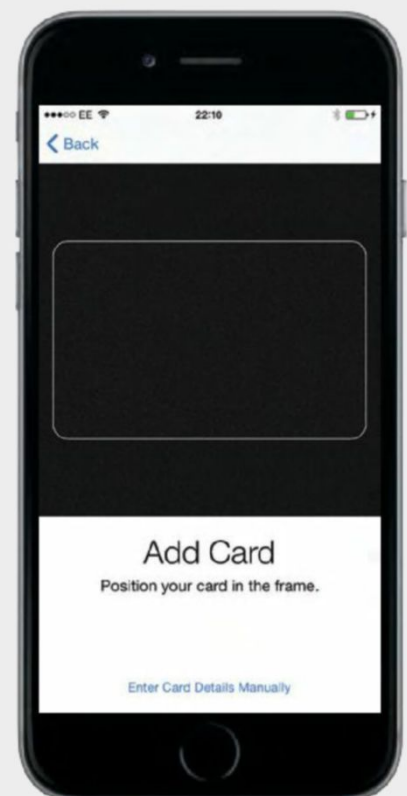
Open Passbook on your iPhone or iPad. Select the option for Apple Pay. Then press [next]

STEP 3

Place your card face up and the correct way around on a flat surface. Hold the phone over it, moving the phone until the card fits inside the frame onscreen.

STEP 4

The camera should pick up your card number. If not, you can input the number manually.



STEP 5

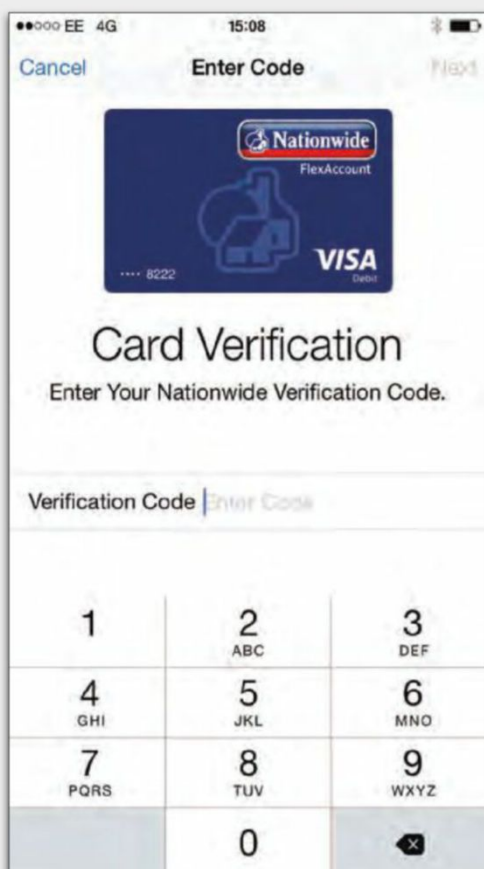
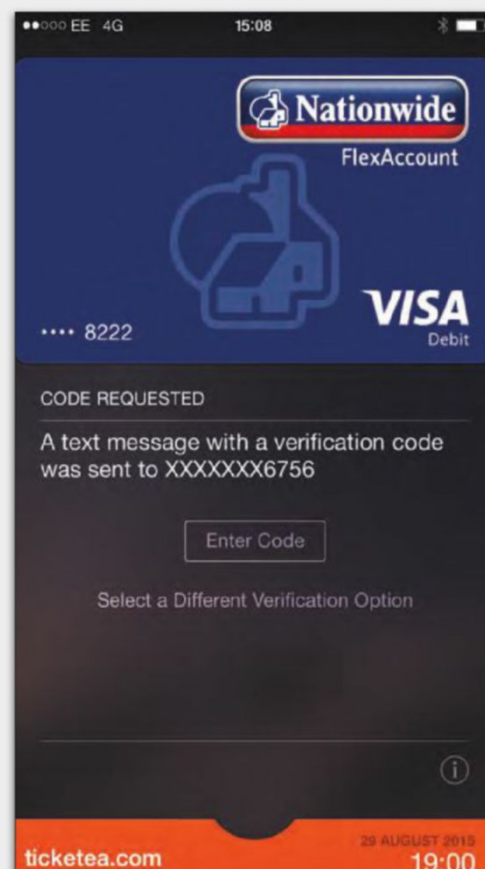
Fill in the rest of the data that the app asks you for (name, expiry date, security code) and press Next.

STEP 6

Select how to verify your card. The options are via text message, via email, or by calling your bank on the number provided. Then press [Next]

STEP 7

You will be provided with a verification code, generally within a minute. Select [Enter Code] Once the code has been entered, press [next]



Congratulations!

You're now ready to start using Apple Pay.

➤ You can add more than one card to your account. All you have to do is go through this procedure again and select which one you want to use when it's time to make a purchase.

I DON'T WANT IT ANY MORE, HOW DO I TAKE MY CARD OFF APPLE PAY?

If you don't want to keep using Apple Pay or you just want to remove one of the cards you've set up removing them is even easier than adding them.

- Open Passbook on your iPhone or iPad
- Select the card that you want to remove
- In the bottom right corner, press the little i symbol inside the circle
- This should bring up the info page. At the top, you can see your most recent transactions
- Scroll down to the bottom of the page
- Press [Remove Card]
- It's all done! Your card is no longer linked to Apple Pay

WHAT MOBILE

... goes shopping with Apple Pay

Intrepid reporters Jo and Tom find out just how easy ☐ or not ☐ it is to use Apple Pay

11:00am

We arrived at Pret a Manger armed with an iPhone 6, a camera, my ID and a debit card in case of emergency. Having timed it for a lull, it was quiet, and the assistant manager seemed happy to see us given her smile. With all the food on offer at Pret, it was difficult to choose my test item, but eventually I selected a chocolate brownie bar and Tom ordered a hot chocolate. (For the record, the brownie bar was deliciously chocolatey.)

She kindly gave us a hot chocolate each on the house, and in the short time between the order and the drink being made we tried

out Apple Pay for the very first time. The cashier put the purchase through as normal, and I placed the phone on the reader. It lit up with a screen showing the imitation-card that it uses to protect your data and asked me for my Touch ID fingerprint. I pressed my thumb to Apple's fingerprint reader, it took approximately two seconds to double-check my fingerprint ☐ it shows a picture of the lines being drawn on its thumbprint image, which is fascinating the first few times ☐ and then produced a tick in a circle in place of the thumbprint image. If I'd managed to miss the word 'Done!' on the screen, the single vibration would have alerted me that the transaction went through.

Simple, swift and easy. Ten out of ten for being Apple Pay ready, Pret.



Spent: £1.50

11:20am

Warmed with success (and hot chocolate), we stepped down the street to Boots. After a quick chat with the manager to remind them of why we were here and what we wanted to do, they were more than happy to let us go ahead with the test. Since Tom was getting hungry by now, he picked out a meal deal and we went to try the purchase.

As before, the cashier put the purchase through and I applied the phone to the card reader. That was when we had the first hiccup; the iPhone requested that I 'Hold Near Reader to Pay'. At that point it was resting against the reader, so I couldn't get it much closer. Fortunately, the cashier was familiar with the problem and requested that I lift it off the reader for a moment and then set it down again. With that piece of good advice, the transaction went through.

A little trickier, but it still worked. Two out of two so far.



Spent: £3.79

11:35am

The Body Shop was our third target. It took a while to decide on my test subject, but eventually I picked what they refer to as a "bath lily" – a loofah, to you and me. Customer consultant Samirah put it through the register for me, and it went through so quickly that Tom had trouble snapping a picture before the screen cleared. Therefore I had to buy another one for photo purposes, and it still worked perfectly the second time around. The process of phone to reader, thumb to fingerprint scanner, accept items, was becoming natural by that point.

Samirah mentioned that, "There are people using [Apple Pay] – we had a man in here a few days ago who used his Apple Watch."

The Body Shop is definitely keeping pace with the future. Three out of three – could we keep going?



Spent: £4.00

11:50am

We wound up at Starbucks for our last test of the day. By this point, I was the one in need of lunch, so I queued up with a panini. The staff at Starbucks warned me that sometimes the machine didn't work, but we'd been successful three times so far. I was confident, everything seemed to be going smoothly . . . and then, disaster struck.

Apple Pay seemed to be having difficulties talking to the card reader. As in Boots, I tried lifting it up and putting it down again, but it failed to connect. Eventually, it gave up on fingerprint recognition and asked me for my passcode. Even that didn't work, and eventually the transaction timed out. The cashier kindly tried the sale again, but the second time failed too, leaving my poor iPhone very confused and still trying its best to reach out to the card reader. Eventually, I resorted to emergency mode and pulled out my contactless debit card. The card worked in less than a second, so I can only conclude that for some reason the Starbucks system wasn't in the mood for fruit.

That particular Starbucks might have a few issues handling Apple Pay but they do make tasty panini. Three out of four successes, but not for lack of trying.



Spent: £3.99

Conclusion:

Overall, Apple Pay works, although with a few hiccups along the way. We wouldn't rely on it as our only means of payment, especially given the limited number of retail outlets and companies that accept Apple Pay, but it's great for those moments when you don't want to fumble with your wallet for loose change. It also doesn't seem to have the minimum spend limit that chip and pin cards do, as a £1.50 transaction went through with zero problems.

To have the best chance of getting Apple Pay to work, you'll need to have the top half of your phone over the reader. Why? Because the NFC transmitter chip in the iPhone 6 is about a third of the way down from the top edge of the phone, and the closer it is to the reader the better.

A good start, and we can't wait to see it get better. As for us? Lunch on expenses is never a bad thing.

What do the experts say?

Apple Pay:

"Apple Pay's launch is certainly good news for the UK, taking the country to the era of digital payments using the NFC technology."

- Pinar Ozcan, Assistant Professor of Strategic Management at Warwick Business School

EE Cash on Tap:

"Using your mobile phone to make payments helps make life quicker and easier for consumers on the high street."

- Marion King, President UK and Ireland at Mastercard

IN THE PICTURE

TOM WELLBURN WAS SO IMPRESSED WITH THE CAMERA ON THE PANASONIC DMC-CM1 THAT HE DECIDED TO PIT IT HEAD-TO-HEAD AGAINST A NIKON DSLR

The Panasonic Lumix DMC-CM1 has a truly excellent camera sensor which shares the same architecture as the FZ1000, one of the best bridge camera's currently available. With a huge 1-inch sensor and the impressive Venus image processing engine on board, there's currently no smartphone on the market that can match it for out-and-out picture quality. Panasonic has essentially taken a digital camera and thrown Android in it for good measure. Obviously, there was no way that I was going to let its skills go to waste. So I did the only right thing and pitted it against an SLR to see whether it could hold its own.

THE CAMERAS

For this test, we picked yet another entry-level SLR with comparable specs to the Panasonic.

Our weapon of choice was the Nikon D3200 along with an 18-55mm kit lens, a comfortable benchmark that represents the majority of budget SLR users. On paper, the specifications for both devices are a bit of a mixed bag. The Nikon has the bigger sensor and more megapixels but the Lumix has a much wider aperture and higher ISO. Of course, having such a wide aperture can bring all sorts of lens distortion issues into play, so it will be interesting to see if these show up in the test. Another impressive feature of the Lumix DMC-CM1 is the focal length, which is a very wide 28mm. This allows photographers to fit a lot of objects in the frame at the expense of bokeh (that cool background blur that makes snappers get all weepy eyed). While this could be an issue to some people, it's nice to see Panasonic going for a device that can be used as an all-round workhorse rather than a niche product.

Having a narrow focal-length makes landscape photography much more difficult.

THE TEST

This test comprises four photographs in various settings which should put the Lumix DMC-CM1 through its paces. With both cameras featuring a full suite of manual settings plus RAW capture, it should be a lot closer than previous tests. Each device was individually calibrated during each test to get the best shot possible at the time; this ensured that we could play to the strengths of both. As usual, all images are completely unedited and straight from the device, so you can be sure that the test is an accurate representation of what to expect. For all of the photographs on test, I decided to take a scenic trek back to my hometown of York. The blend of historic landmarks and statues made it a prime location for some inspiring imagery.

CAMERA OVERVIEWS

Nikon D3200 (with 18-55mm kit lens)

Megapixels: 24.2
 Sensor size: APS-C
 Aperture: f/3.5 □ f/5.6
 ISO: 100 - 6400
 Back side illuminated: No
 Image stabilisation: Yes (optical)
 Manual mode: Yes



Panasonic Lumix DMC-CM1

Megapixels: 20
 Sensor size: 1"
 Aperture: f/2.8 □ f/11
 ISO: 125 - 12800
 Back side illuminated: Yes
 Image stabilisation: No
 Manual mode: Yes



TEST 1: LANDSCAPE

Heading over Ouse Bridge in York reveals a postcard image of the river and the various pubs scattered along its edge. The famous Kings Arms can be seen on the left side, which is a popular spot for drinkers in the summer. With plenty of objects in the distance, there's no better landscape image than this. The Panasonic does an admirable job of capturing distant detail but it can't compete with the larger APS-C sensor found in the Nikon. At normal viewing distance, the Lumix looks like a perfectly fine image, with a well exposed shot and very neutral colours. The contrast between sky and buildings is well defined, with the highlights coming through unhurt. Zoom in, however, and things start to take a different turn. Edges are a lot softer on the Panasonic, while fine detail is lost behind pixelation and a good amount of digital noise. The fine detail at extreme distances isn't captured half as much as on the Nikon, which also has slightly better colour reproduction to boot. The Nikon does suffer some chromatic aberration at the edges of the image, as shown on the crop of the tower. While the detail is still a million miles away from a smartphone, the D3200 is the winner here.

PANASONIC LUMIX DMC-CM1



- + Good colour reproduction
- + Preserves detail in sky
- Digital noise
- Soft image
- Loses fine detail



NIKON 3200



- + Better colours
- + Sharp detail even at distance
- + Preserves dynamics
- Chromatic aberration



TEST 2: FULL BODY PORTRAIT

Sat just outside York Minster is a statue of Constantine, the first Christian Roman Emperor. Back in 306 AD, when Constantine was first proclaimed, York was a powerful Legionary base for the Roman Empire. The ruins of its headquarters can still be found buried under part of the Minster. The oxidised copper statue makes an excellent choice for a full-body portrait. The Panasonic makes a really good effort, producing an image that is almost identical to that of the SLR. The overall detail across both cameras is excellent, though the Panasonic comes across as a bit more grainy and harsh. The edges are all ever so slightly more jagged, with a subtle loss of surface detail when compared with the Nikon. The different focal lengths also seem to play a noticeable part in this image, with the 28mm wide-angle lens making Constantine's head seem a little slimmer than I remember. Bokeh is more evident on the Nikon, though there is still a small amount on the Panasonic. Other than this, colour reproduction and shadow/highlight levels are perfectly on point, with nothing blown out of the ordinary. I would perhaps argue that the Panasonic was a touch overexposed, though that was a fault of the screen under intense sunlight more than anything. At times, it can be difficult to make an accurate judgement of levels due to glare.

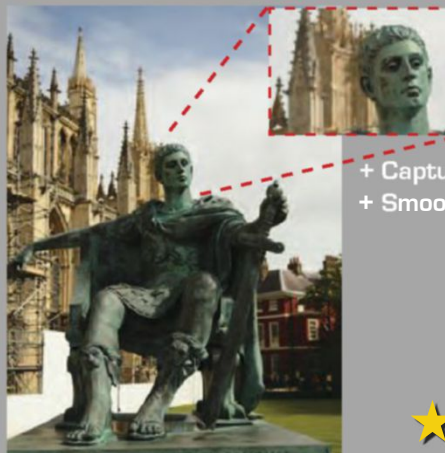
PANASONIC LUMIX DMC-CM1



- + Very close to SLR
- + Minimal noise overall
- Loses a bit of the subtle detail
- Slightly harsh edges
- A touch overexposed



NIKON 3200



- + Captures fine detail
- + Smooth edges



TEST 3: LOW-LIGHT

For this test, I headed straight to the most impressive landmark I could find within the city of York. York Minster is the second largest Gothic cathedral in Northern Europe and envelopes the skyline of the city, with the 230 foot central tower visible for miles around. Venturing inside, I stumbled across an array of candles flickering away in a dimly lit corner. It seemed like the perfect opportunity to test the low-light capabilities of both cameras. One thing to note about the Panasonic Lumix DMC-CM1 is a lack of image stabilisation. This can make low-light shots incredibly tricky, especially at long shutter speeds. Thankfully, it doesn't seem to have much of an issue shooting at higher ISOs, meaning that you can forgo the blur at the expense of a bit more noise. Both cameras performed very well in this test, with a perfectly neutral image that is full of detail and colour. Exposure is a matter of taste, with the Nikon slightly under and the Panasonic slightly over. Since it's easier to post-process an underexposed image, the Nikon probably has the edge. Without the help of the viewfinder, it was hard to accurately judge the lighting conditions of the room on the Panasonic. Still, you wouldn't really believe that this was shot at 1600 ISO. Noise is very minimal unless viewed up close and it's only then that the Nikon narrowly edges it. In RAW mode, we can see that the Panasonic is slightly softer versus the Nikon. The text on the sign in particular can't quite match the sharpness of the sensor, which is no doubt due to larger sensor able to capture more detail. There's evidence of quite a bit of digital noise, which muddies up the image somewhat, whereas the Nikon has more film noise. Though neither is that desirable, the artefacts produced by that ugly digital noise are far less desirable compared with the standard graininess.

PANASONIC LUMIX DMC-CM1



- + Perfectly neutral image
- + Lovely dynamic range
- + High ISO, minimal noise

- Digital noise can be seen up close
- A touch soft
- Slightly overexposed



NIKON 3200



- + Sharp image
- + Plenty of detail
- + Captured bright highlights well

- Grainy up close
- Underexposed



TEST 4: MACRO

For this test I wanted to check the close-up capabilities of both cameras, so I immediately went on the lookout for some colourful flowers to photograph. After leaving the famous Victorian street known as The Shambles, I stumbled across a bed of red flowers (I'd name them but alas, I'm not a flower expert!). The colours immediately popped out at me and it seemed like a prime opportunity to test both macro and colour reproduction. With the Panasonic having a bigger maximum aperture, I was unsurprised to see it beat the Nikon in this test. The 18-55mm kit lens could only reach f/3.5, meaning less bokeh and a focal distance that is further away versus the Lumix. Sure, I could have zoomed in to the same distance but that would have been an unfair comparison. Noise in both images is practically absent thanks to the low ISO used, which ensures that all the fine details are easier captured. The Panasonic has a dedicated macro mode that allows it to focus up to 3cm away from the object, which is a pretty crazy feat. Detail was exceptional, even capturing the small hairs which reside on the petals. The colour reproduction was also a million times better than the Nikon, with a vibrant colour pallet that manages to impress yet remains natural in appearance. By comparison, the Nikon looks washed out and it seems to be struggling with the bright lighting conditions. This is definitely a point for the Lumix DMC-CM1.

PANASONIC LUMIX DMC-CM1



- + Excellent colour reproduction
- + Masses of detail
- + Plenty of bokeh
- Struggles to focus beyond the centre



NIKON 3200



- + Good detail
- + Nice bokeh
- Washed-out colours
- Misses key detail on petals



CONCLUSION

OVERALL OPINION:

So how did the Lumix perform overall? Although I was overly critical in places, I have to say that it performed extremely well considering the mammoth task placed in front of it. The Nikon was still the victor throughout the majority of tests, though I was impressed by just how close it was in places. Looking at the images from normal viewing distance, you'd be hard pressed to see any obvious discrepancies between the two. The general consensus after all the tests was that the Panasonic seems to suffer from a little more digital artefacts up close, whereas the Nikon has a little more desirable [film noise]. This is likely a result of the differences in sensor size and ultimately something that Panasonic can do little about. It's important to note that all of the images were saved in a RAW format, which means that there was no post-processing involved. The Venus Image Processing Engine is highly regarded as being good at ironing out the kinks, so it's likely that some of the noise could be taken care of. Still, for a camera on a smartphone there is no competition. This is the best of the best.



LANDSCAPE	★★★★☆	★★★★☆
FULL BODY PORTRAIT	★★★★☆	★★★★★
LOW-LIGHT	★★★★☆	★★★★☆
MACRO	★★★★★	★★★★☆
OVERALL	★★★★☆	★★★★★

Don't look down

This month's reviews concentrate on classic remakes and some true franchise favourites

Reviewer: Thomas Wellburn – for full reviews, check out WhatMobile.net

Rollercoaster Tycoon 3

(iOS only) £3.99

The classic theme park builder has finally arrived on iOS and boy is it worth the wait. This is a full PC port that includes everything from the original, though the expansions are sadly absent. Tasked with managing a theme park, it's your job to build rides and keep the numerous guests satisfied, all while maintaining a healthy source of profit. Controls have been completely redesigned for touch interfaces and, while they are a little finicky at times, they mostly work well. Finally, a proper mobile theme park builder!



Farming Simulator 16

(iOS only) £3.99

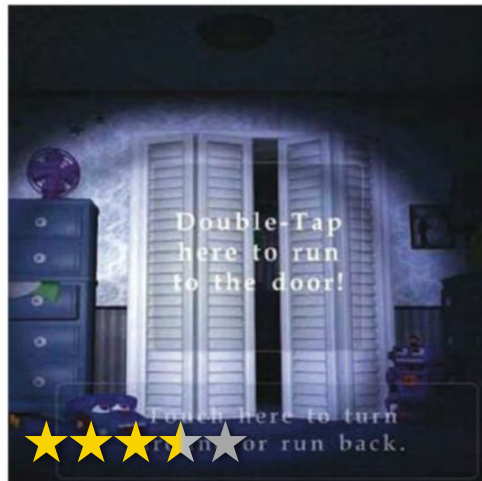
Carrying on much like previous instalments of the series, Farming Simulator 16 tasks the player with cultivating crops using a variety of machinery while attempting to maintain a healthy profit margin. It's a little more simplified versus the console counterparts, though it's still every bit as addictive. Virtual busywork for the simple-minded folk.



Five Nights at Freddy's 4

(Android and iOS) £2.29

Already a hugely popular series with a cult following, Five Nights at Freddy's 4 switches up the gameplay by placing the player inside a child's bedroom. There's no cameras this time round and all you have is a flashlight for comfort. Other than this, it's much the same. Stop Freddy and the other animatronic monsters from scaring the hell out of you.



Angry Birds 2

(Android and iOS) free *in-app purchases

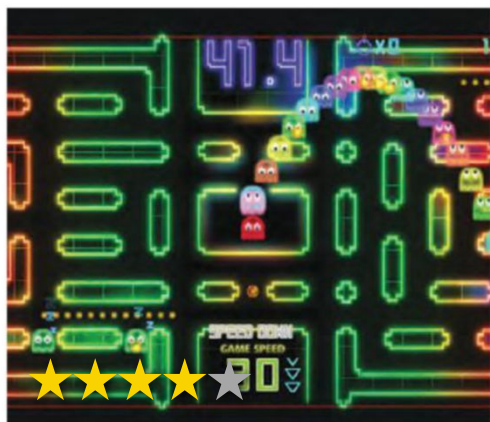
Angry Birds 2 brings several improvements to the most popular mobile game ever. While the basic concept is identical, birds are now stored as cards which can be swapped during the level. Stages are comprised of multiple screens, which must be cleared to progress. The only problem is in-app purchases, which are now very intrusive.



Pac-Man Championship Edition DX

(Android and iOS) £3.99

The definitive Pac-Man game finally comes to Android and iOS. This version features a much more high-scoring focus, as the theme is to kill as many ghosts as possible in a given time. Sleepers make for ample combo's and all it takes is a power pill for maximum points! Frantic, fast-paced fun.



Game of Thrones Episode 5: A Nest Of Vipers Review

(Android and iOS) free

The fifth episode continues the story of House Forrester, a group of loyal Stark followers fighting for survival after the fall of Winterfell. After episode four saw the player in a bit of a stand-off at the end (no spoilers here), episode 5 serves mainly as damage control for what previously happened.



Warhammer: Arcane Magic

(Android and iOS) £7.99

Warhammer: Arcane Magic is a turn-based strategy game with a focus on careful strategic planning. Controlling a group of wizards, it's your job to wipe out the enemy team with the use of spell cards. Each chapter represents a battle in a different locale, with a variety of arenas to battle in.



Operation Dracula

(iOS only) £4.49

Operation Dracula is a classic 2D shooter with a steep learning curve. Even on the default difficulty setting, this is a hard game. There's a story somewhere that's supposed to be about vampires, though it's hard to tell. As is typical with these sorts of games, you control a 16-bit spacecraft as it flies through barrages of enemy fire and projectiles.



World of Warriors: Quest

(Android and iOS) free

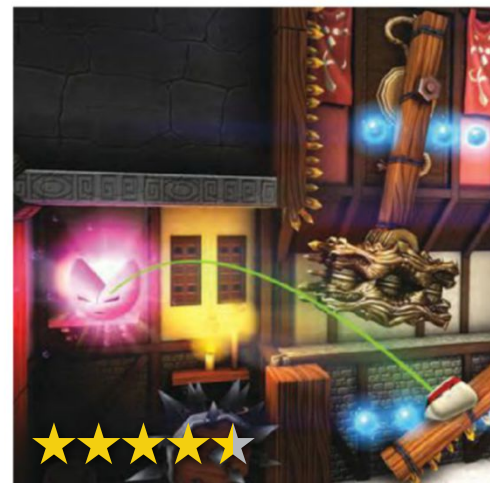
Following on from the blade battling World of Warriors, this new title includes turn based battles and RPG elements which take place throughout a number of levels. The world map is expansive and there's a hint of Final Fantasy Tactics when it comes to strategy.



To-Fu Fury

(iOS only) £1.49

Developed by Amazon Game Studios, To-Fu Fury is a side-scrolling platformer where you control a piece of bean curd through various levels. Sticking to walls is the main mode of transport and you'll need to avoid traps on the way. There's plenty of challenges to complete, with later levels pitting you against a bunch of ninja adversaries.



All mapped out

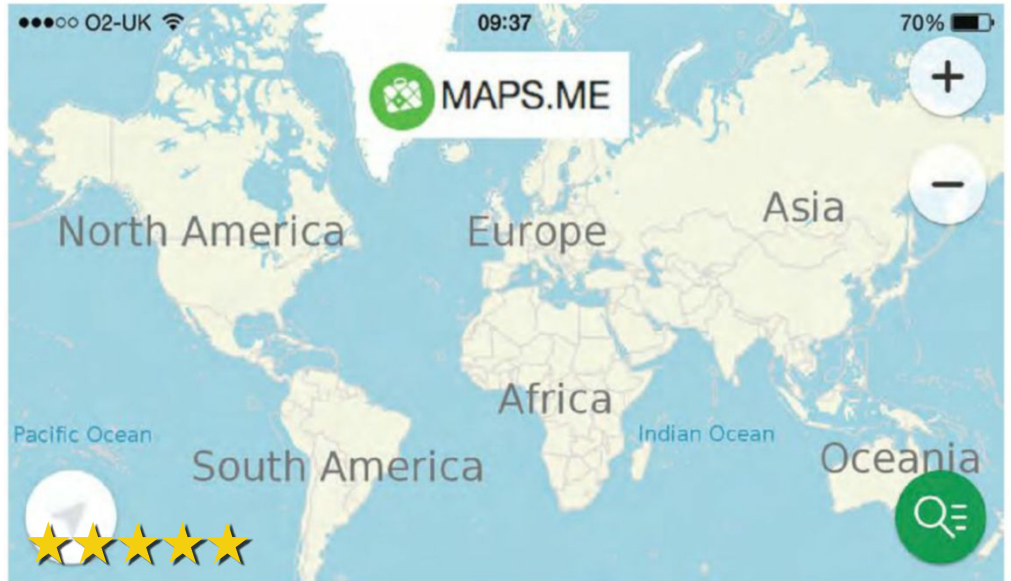
The latest iOS and Android apps reveal some useful aids for travellers and bookworms alike

Reviewer: Johanna Tatum – for full reviews, check out WhatMobile.net

MAPS.ME

Free (iOS and Android)

Going to Paris and worried about running out of data? MAPS.ME is an offline and completely free map app that leaves your bandwidth alone after the initial download. Detailed maps are available for anywhere in the world, from London to obscure Pacific islands. It's easy to use – just focus in on the area you want to download the map for the first time, and then you can go exploring. Need caffeine? Just search 'coffee' and it'll show you the nearest locations.



Indeed Job Search

Free (iOS and Android) Free (iOS and Android)

Looking for a new job, or maybe one for the first time? Indeed is one of the biggest job search websites out there, and its job app means that you can search on the go. It's easy to use, whether logged in or not, although some features (such as saving jobs for later) do require you to be logged in.



Habitica

Free (iOS and Android)

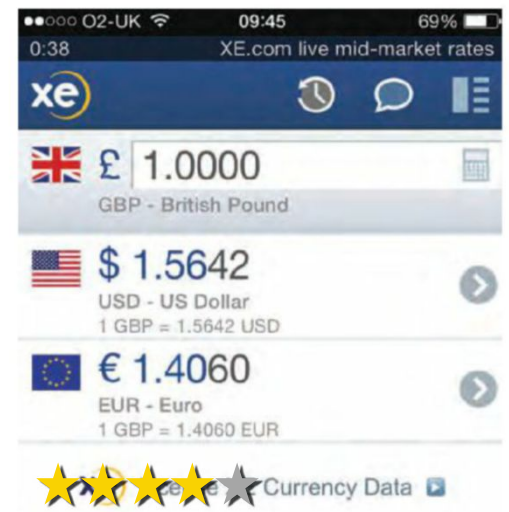
Formerly HabitRPG, Habitica is a productivity and organisation app with a difference. It turns your life into a game, rewarding you for doing good things (like completing an hour's work) and reducing your avatar's health when you do something naughty (like eat junk food).



XE Currency

Free (iOS, Android, Windows, and BlackBerry)

On holiday and not sure how much something costs? Just load up this currency converter, which works in offline or online mode, and check. XE Currency lets you check amounts against multiple other currencies, so you can see how much £100 will buy you in euros, US dollars, or Japanese Yen.



Theory Test for Car Drivers UK – Driving Test Success

£1.99 (iOS)

This app will help that those still learning to pass their theory with flying colours. Using the official theory test revision questions from the DVSA, it's easy to use and quick to learn with. New drivers can purchase this app bundled with the hazard perception test and the Highway Code.



iLED Ultimate LED Banner

Free (iOS)

Need to communicate with someone in a noisy environment? This app lets you scroll a message along your phone's screen in up to six colours at once, and even lets you put your own picture in the background.. An upgrade to the Pro version is available for £0.79, if you prefer no ads and more features, but the free app works very well.



Star Tracker Lite

Free (iOS and Android)

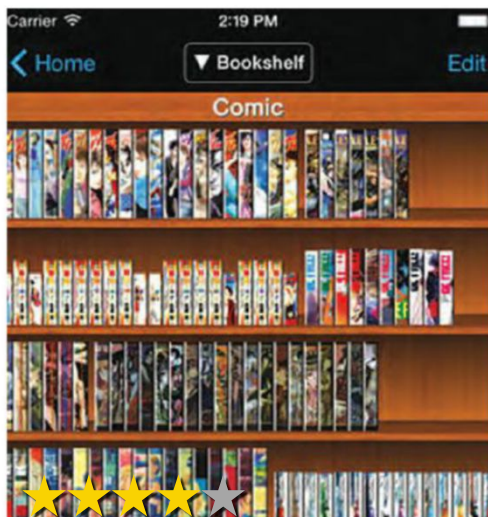
Ever wonder what stars you're looking at? Star Tracker Lite uses GPS to figure out where you are and shows you the stars through your phone's screen. Simply move your phone to see different parts of the night sky, from stars to distant galaxies. If you stop on a constellation, this app will illustrate it for you, showing you the Gemini twins or Orion with his bow.



SideBooks

Free (iOS and Android)

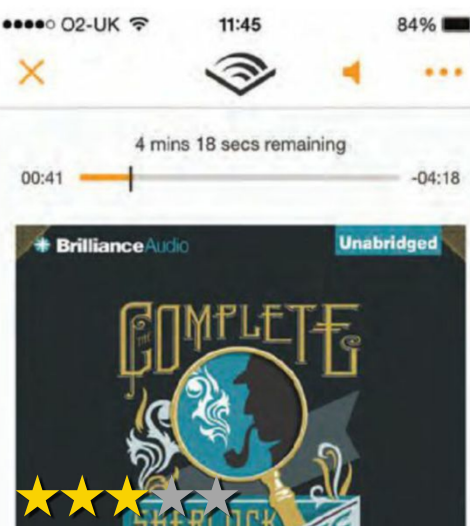
SideBooks is a reader app that lets you leaf through PDF, ZIP, RAR, CBZ, and CBR files – good news for comic book fans. Its bookshelf system is easy to use and organise, handling pictures and text with equal ease. It also gives you the option of reading left to right, right to left, or top to bottom.



Audiobooks from Audible

Free (iOS, Android, and Windows)

Sometimes audiobooks are an improvement in words on a page. Whether it's the world coming to life in your ears, the fact that you can't read and drive at the same time, or simply because it's the only way you can 'read' the book, Audiobooks lets you listen to the story as you live it.



Silk – Interactive Generative Art

£2.29 (iOS)

Silk is a relaxing app that lets you create brightly coloured designs with a swipe of a finger. The seven basic colours can be mixed and merged, letting you fit your image to your mood.



Nintendo 3DS

Dungeon crawler adds another dimension in update of the Etrian Untold franchise

Reviewer: Thomas Wellburn – for full reviews, check out WhatMobile.net

Etrian Odyssey 2 Untold: The Fafnr Knight ★★★★★

Publisher: Atlus **Developer:** Atlus

Where to Buy: In-Store **Price:** £29.99

Atlus has enjoyed plenty of success with the Etrian Untold franchise, taking the original DS titles and brushing them up for the current handheld generation. Etrian Odyssey 2 Untold: The Fafnr Knight continues this theme, offering a faithful remake that boasts improved graphics and gameplay mechanics. Those who were lucky enough to play the original will know that it's a dungeon crawler with emphasis on navigating tightly packed labyrinths and defeating monsters.

The main bulk of storyline is set on the outskirts of High Lagaard, with the city itself acting as a hub where players can stock up on items and equipment ahead of their next adventure or accept one of the many side-quests available. Two modes are included in the game, with 'Story Mode' adding a completely new experience which includes new dungeons and some excellent voice acting to boot. 'Classic Mode' on the other hand is a faithful remake of the original DS version, where the player creates a character and watches the narrative unfold around them, rather than vice-versa. While there is still a basic outline to what's happening, it's much subtler and far more focused on the general lore surrounding the various dungeons and labyrinths.

What makes Etrian Odyssey 2 so enjoyable is the exemplary dungeon crawling experience and ability to make you feel completely alone in your surroundings. Optional features such as the cartographer function really help to set it apart from the competition. There's nothing more unnerving than needing to document your own journey through the labyrinths in order to find a way out.

Battles within the game take on a familiar turn-based system, with the usual weapons and magic at your disposal. There's an additional berserker skill called Force that needs to be filled up during battle. Once your Force meter is maxed out, you can unleash several power moves dependent on the class of character. Enemies range from the weak and cutesy to humungous dragons and demons. Later enemies are quite challenging, with a good amount of grinding needed to remain competitive. Even on easy mode, it's no pushover. Field on Enemies (FOE) are super boss encounters which stalk dungeons while you're inside, leading to an intense game of cat and mouse as you desperately try and outmanoeuvre the inevitable battle. Thankfully, Etrian 2 has introduced dungeon traps which can make things a little easier. There's nothing more satisfying than watching a FOE fall to his doom.

Etrian Odyssey 2 Untold: The Fafnr Knight is an excellent update to an already fantastic title. With around 45 hours gameplay under a normal playthrough, there's no shortage of things to explore and enemies to fight. The new modes offer just enough to make it feel refreshing, while the classic experience still remains for those who want a pure dungeon crawler.



3D Streets of Rage 2 ★★★★★

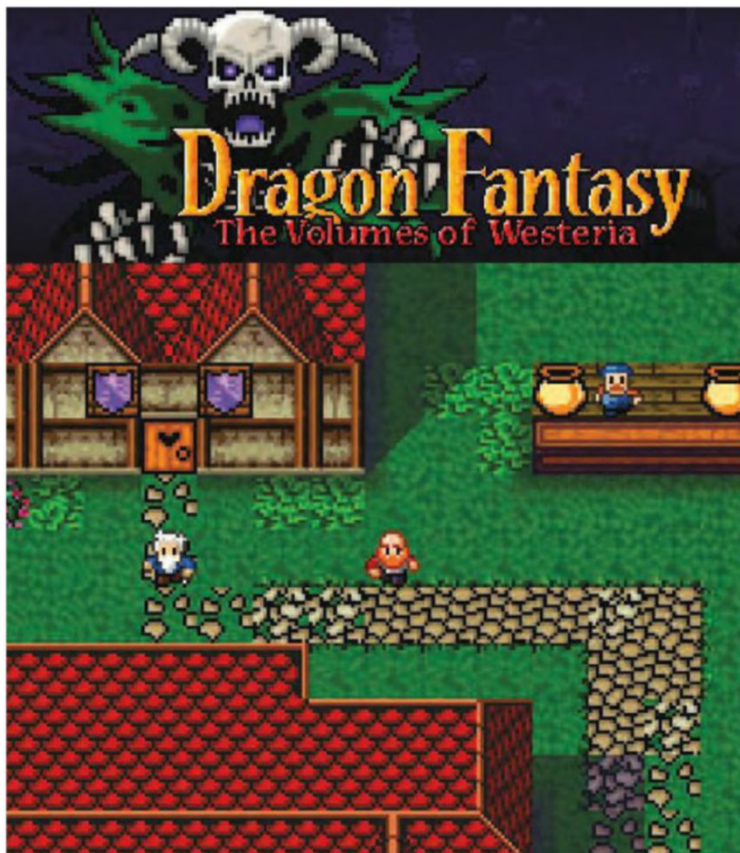
Developer: SEGA **Publisher:** M2

Where to Buy: eShop **Price:** £4.49

Developer M2 didn't really have much to worry about much when it re-released Streets of Rage 2 on the Nintendo eShop in 3D. If you was a fan of the classic beat-em-up franchise before, it's likely that you'll find plenty to enjoy in this updated version. It's a perfect recreation that includes everything from the original, while also taking advantage of the 3D capabilities built inside each Nintendo 3DS. Graphically, this is the best that Streets of Rage 2 has ever looked.

For those of you unfortunate enough to have never played Streets of Rage 2, the story carries over from the first title, with Adam Hunter now being held captive by a villain simply known as 'Mr. X'. It's up his team of hardened street fighter allies to fight their way through various stages of dystopian cityscapes until they can eventually locate and defeat him. During your travels, you'll fight a bunch of bizarre goons and henchman including the infamous 'whip girls'. Weapons and food can be found by smashing up objects littered throughout the stage, which contribute to your overall damage bonus and health.

Four characters are available, with each one offering subtle differences in their skillset. There's your typical mix of fast, weaker fighters, all-rounder's and brawlers which deal lots of damage but move rather slow. M2 has thrown in a few extra additions for good measure, including local multiplayer and the ability to swap between western and Japanese game variants. If you've never played a Streets of Rage title before, this is well worth a look.



Dragon Fantasy: The Volumes of Westeria ★★★★★

Developer: Choice Provisions

Publisher: Muteki Corporation **Where to Buy:** eShop

Price: £4.49

Old-school Japanese RPGs are commonplace within the Nintendo eShop, meaning new releases undergo stiff competition when they first hit the market. Dragon Fantasy is another example of an excellent J-RPG that probably won't get the exposure it deserves. With its 16-bit SNES-era graphics, it's a nostalgic tale through memory lane that will remind you of many a Final Fantasy game. After the prince is kidnapped during a ceremony, it's up to three characters and their unique intertwining narratives to save the day. The game takes place over three separate chapters, which each focus on said characters' story. It's a nice touch that manages to turn a very generic J-RPG story into much bigger, especially when observing how different parts of the story fit together. It's also worth mentioning the writing, which is very tongue-in-cheek.

The overworld is decent in size and there's around 10 hours of gameplay for those who ride it out to the end. Considering the three chapters, there's not a huge amount of things to be seen and a fair bit of overlap between locations. A suitable portion of your time will be spent grinding to afford better equipment and weapons, though it wouldn't be a J-RPG without this. If you're a fan of old-school RPGs, you really can't go wrong.

PlayStation Vita

High-profile franchise provides solid gameplay, if you can overlook its technical limitations

Reviewer: Thomas Wellburn – for full reviews, check out WhatMobile.net

Resident Evil: Revelations 2



Developer: Frima Studio **Publisher:** Capcom
Where to Buy: In-Store **Price:** £29.99

You could argue that Resident Evil: Revelations 2 was a return to form when it first debuted on Xbox One and Playstation 4. The action elements of the sixth incarnation were stripped back in favour of more survival horror elements. It wasn't without its faults, with a convoluted story and stuttered pacing but it was still a far cry from the disaster that was Resident Evil 6. The original Revelations launched first on the Nintendo 3DS, so it's interesting to see Capcom making the jump to Vita. With its extra graphical prowess and processing capabilities, we genuinely expected great things. Unfortunately, the porting process seems to have carried over a few problems.

Capcom did not spearhead the development of this handheld title. It outsourced its creation to Canadian developer Frima Studio, who's track record includes plenty of PSP titles and a good amount of mobile/web-based games. This was essentially the first time it had ever been gifted the chance at developing such a high-profile franchise, and it shows in some areas. It's worth noting that a lot of these issues are technical, though hat's off to Frima Studio for essentially carrying across the console version fully intact, including all the DLC and content previously found.

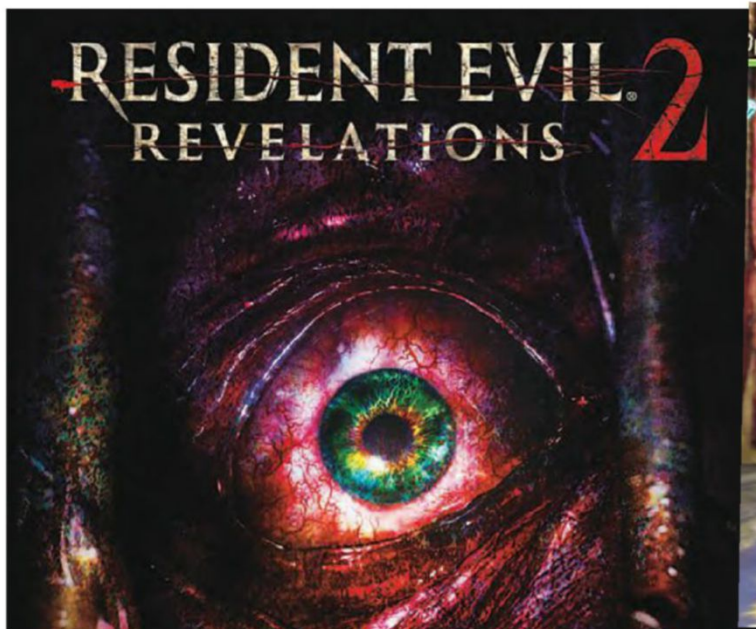
Series favourites Claire Redfield and Barry Burton both make triumphant returns, with two fresh characters in tow. Each character

has their own story arcs, which intertwine throughout the ensuing narrative. The majority of the game centres around a mysterious island, with Claire and her partner Moira trapped inside. Barry arrives on the same island six months after Claire, which creates some interesting storyline parallels.

WAITING GAME

Graphically, a lot has changed from the console versions. Environments are bland and jagged, with the lower polygon counts far too evident. This game doesn't even look as good as the first Revelations title, which released on the Nintendo 3DS more than three years ago. Then there's the frame-rate issues, which at times become inexcusably bad. Raid Mode suffers the worst, with the frantic action simply too much for the little portable console to handle. Loading times are equally appalling, with over a minute waiting time on some screens. It wouldn't be so bad if it happened occasionally but it occurs after almost every element in the game.

Still, if you can forgive the technical limitations there is a solid game to be had out of it. The controls feel natural with good use of the touch-screen interface. Quick-select items now reside in the corners of the screen for easy access, while menus can also be fully navigated on the display. Gameplay is exactly the same as I remember from the console versions, with a bigger emphasis on ammo conservation and a tighter focus on survival horror. While I'd hardly call it scary, it still feels more faithful to the original than some of the recent titles. If you can live with the shortcomings, this is a faithful port of the console version that just about hits the mark.



Lost Dimension



Developer: Luncarse **Publisher:** NIS America

Where to Buy: In-Store **Price:** £29.99

Lost Dimension is a tactical Japanese role playing game with a larger-than-life narrative. The story begins with a mysterious man known only as 'The End', who enters our world through a portal from another dimension. After orchestrating a series of terrorist attacks and threatening to destroy the planet in 13 days, it's up to the elite S.E.A.L.E.D team to siege his exclusive island and stop the impending destruction. However, 'The End' has planted traitors within the group, so it's up to protagonist, Sho, to decide who is legitimate and who is a snitch. Suitably cheesy. Suitably Japanese.

This trust system is a big part of the game, as various benefits can be had from befriending fellow team-mates. Each traitor is cast off the island during a group vote session done by the entire team, so it's important to build those alliances. It just so happens that Sho can also read peoples inner thoughts using his psychic abilities, which comes in handy for filtering out those who cannot be trusted. The real-time combat system runs pretty deep, with a lot of individual control for each character. Battles are divided into player phases, where you strategically plant the team around the battlefield, and enemy phases, where you sit back and hope that your tactics pay off. After each fight, there's a light-hearted social phase, which is prime opportunity to grill your team for potential moles. If you miss a traitor, they will come back to haunt you in battle. The social system may be a bit overwhelming at times but this is a solid title with some unique ideas.



Dungeon Travelers 2: The Royal Library & The Monster Seal

Developer: Altus **Publisher:** Aquaplus

Where to Buy: In-Store **Price:** £29.99



It's difficult to put into words how to describe this Japanese dungeon crawler. On the one hand, it's a fun and solid experience with plenty to get stuck into. On the other, it's an overtly sexualised mess. The storyline focuses on Fried, who has a job within the Royal Library. He's tasked with the difficult mission of sealing various 'monster girls' into magical books. Oh dear, you're thinking. If he can't fight, whatever will he do? Recruit a bunch of scantily-clad women to fight for him, of course! So off goes Fried with a band of powerful females, cleansing the evil that lurks inside a variety of complex labyrinths.

The mechanics are pretty solid, with plenty of deep statistics and subclasses to ponder over. Each character has a unique upgrade tree with multiple classes to pick from. Combat is turn-based and includes an action meter, which uses the speed skill to dictate who attacks first. Attacks can also be combined between party members for some pretty powerful special moves. When defeating a monster, you effectively absorb its soul into the book. After absorbing enough enemies, you can create a seal book which further enhances your party's skills. It's a rewarding dynamic that encourages grinding but gives you an incentive to keep playing. It's a shame then that the sexualisation lets it down so badly, as it's actually a good title.

WHAT MOBILE

BUYER'S GUIDE

Buying a new device can be a difficult decision. Our comprehensive buyer's guide is here to help you.



55 Phone reviews

85 Tablet reviews

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Acer Liquid E2

Reviewed: January 2014, price: £189.99
<http://www.acer.co.uk>

Stacked up against recent entries in the budget market, the Acer Liquid E2 is simply outdated. It's a functional Android handset but the clunky, thick design makes it feel like you're holding a toy and the software doesn't have any standout features. Acer will have to seriously raise its game if it's to be a contender in the phone market.

OS Android 4.2 Jelly Bean
Processor Quad-core 1.2 GHz
Screen 4.5 inches
Resolution 540 x 960 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 4GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 131 x 68 x 9.9mm
Weight 140g
Battery 2000 mAh

VERDICT: A dated, bulky phone saved by its reasonable price.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Acer Liquid Jade

Reviewed: April 2015, price: £199
<http://www.acer.co.uk>

A decent handset from a smaller brand, the Liquid Jade has all the components in place to be a much better handset than it actually is. What holds it back is Acer's lack of polish when compared to bigger brands like Motorola. The end result is a handset that you could settle for, but probably shouldn't.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 1.3GHz quad-core
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 720 x 1,280 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB/16GB
MicroSD compatible? No
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 140.5 x 69 x 7.5mm
Weight 110g
Battery 2,100 mAh

VERDICT: A decent low-end handset, but there are too many better alternatives.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Alcatel One Touch Pop S3

Reviewed: September 2014, price: £80
www.alcatelonetouch.com/uk

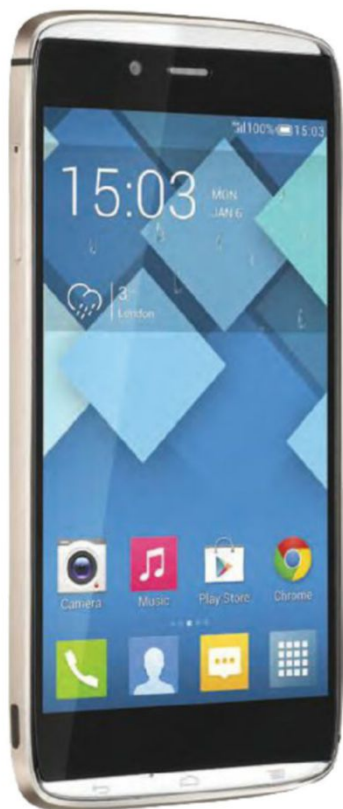
The Alcatel One Touch POP S3 has its merits, especially taking into account the sub-£100 price of the device. The problem here is that by making room for 4G capability Alcatel has been forced to make cutbacks in crucial areas. However, if you are simply after the option to access faster web browsing and app speeds on the go, then the POP S3 offers you that at the cheapest price possible.

OS Android 4.3 Jelly Bean
Processor 1.2GHz quad-core
Screen 4 inches
Resolution 480 x 800 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 4GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes
Camera 5MP rear-facing, VGA front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 123 x 64.4 x 9.9mm
Weight 130g
Battery 2,000 mAh

VERDICT: Cheap, sure, but its poor quality renders its 4G capability near pointless.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





Alcatel One Touch Idol Alpha

Reviewed: February 2015, price: £319
www.alcatelonetouch.com/uk

While it's good to see manufacturers branching out from the traditional black slab design, the Idol Alpha is a reminder of why the slab works. There are just too many compromises here, and the hardware does not make amends for them. Aside from the fact that Android itself is a powerful operating system that you can tailor to your heart's content, there's very little to redeem this phone.

OS Android 4.2 Jelly Bean
Processor 1.2GHz quad-core
Screen 4.7 inches
Resolution 720 x 1280 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 16GB
Micro SD compatible? No
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 1.3MP front-facing
Video 1080p

Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 138 x 66.6 x 7.5mm
Weight 117.4 g
Battery 2,000 mAh

VERDICT: A decent camera is the only redeeming feature on this overpriced handset.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Alcatel One Touch Idol X+

Reviewed: June 2014, price: £TBC
www.alcatelonetouch.com/uk

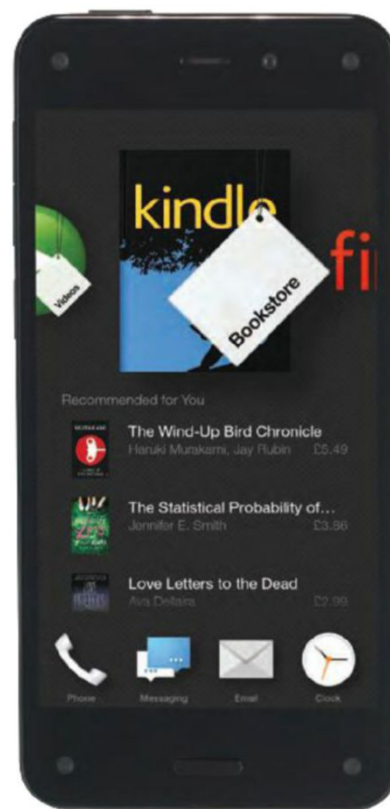
We usually greet lesser-known brands with open arms, but never has one disappointed as much as Alcatel with its One Touch Idol X+. Despite decent specs, it's the handset's flaws that hog the limelight. It's outperformed by other handsets in its price bracket in just about every respect. It's hard to envisage anyone patient enough to waste their time with it.

OS Android 4.2 Jelly Bean
Processor Octa-core 2GHz
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 1080 x 1920 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB or 32GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Video 1080p

Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 140.4 x 69.1 x 7.9mm
Weight 130g
Battery 2,500 mAh

VERDICT: With such great competition the One Touch Idol X+ simply looks irrelevant.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Amazon Fire Phone

Reviewed: December 2014, price: £400

When we first learned of the 3D capabilities of the Amazon Fire Phone we thought it might be a gimmick. Instead, it turned out to be the feature we love the most. Its other interface aspects are riddled with hiccups which can add to some severe usability issues. Its design has some questionable choices, too. It has a lot of potential though, and we're eagerly looking forward to a sequel.

OS Android KitKat 4.4
Processor 2.2GHz quad-core
Screen 4.7-inches
Resolution 1,280 x 720 pixels
Memory 2GB
Storage 32GB
microSD compatible? Yes, up to 64GB
Camera 13MP front-facing,

2.1MP rear-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 139.2 x 66.5 x 8.9mm
Weight 160g
Battery 2,400 mAh

VERDICT: A promising yet flawed debut effort, recommendable only to the curious.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





Apple iPhone 5c

Reviewed: December 2013, price: £469 (16GB) £549 (32GB)

If you need a splash of colour in your life and you're already a massive fan of the iOS operating system, then the iPhone 5c is much the same as the previous iPhone 5. There's a slightly upgraded front-facing camera and 4G will work on any UK network, but other than that you're getting the exact same thing. The iPhone 5c is simply around for those of you who love great design without breaking the bank.

OS iOS 7
Processor Dual-core 1.3GHz
Screen 4 inches
Resolution 640 x 1136 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 16/32GB
MicroSD Compatible? No
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 1.2MP front-facing

Video 1080
Connectivity 4G
Size 12.4 x 59.2 x 9mm
Weight 132g
Battery 1,510 mAh

VERDICT: It's the most colourful iPhone to date, but it's identical to the iPhone 5.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Apple iPhone 5s

Reviewed: December 2013, price: £549 (16GB) £629 (32GB) £709 (64GB)

With fingerprint identity, 64-bit A7 64-bit chip delivers up to twice the performance of the iPhone 4 and 5c, many people will opt to pay the extra £80 or so over the 5c. They'll also get an improved camera with 15 per cent larger sensor and improved low-light capabilities. The True Tone flash incorporates two flashes each matched to different light temperatures so flesh tones are more natural with flash pictures.

OS iOS 7
Processor Dual-core 1.3GHz ARM V8
Screen 4 inches
Resolution 1136 x 640 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 16GB, 32GB or 64GB
MicroSD Compatible? No

Camera 8MP rear-facing, 1.2MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 123.8 x 58.6 x 7.6mm
Weight 112g
Battery 1,560 mAh

VERDICT: The gold standard in user-friendly smartphones, with a ton of power to boot.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Apple iPhone 6

Reviewed: November 2014, price: £539

Calling it 'the best iPhone ever' almost seems a little redundant. Of course it's better - it's more powerful, has a better camera, and NFC could soon become a huge deal. We're not quite as keen on the aesthetics of it versus older iPhone designs, but it's still got a wonderful premium build and a beautifully sharp display. The option for greatly expanded storage sizes shouldn't be undervalued, either.

OS iOS8
Processor Apple A8 1.4GHz
Screen 4.7 inches
Resolution 1334 x 750 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 16GB/64GB/128GB
Micro SD compatible? No
Camera 8MP iSight rear-facing, 1.2MP front-facing

Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 138.1 x 67 x 6.9mm
Weight 129g
Battery 1,810 mAh

VERDICT: Bigger and better than ever, just as you'd expect. The definitive iPhone.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





Apple iPhone 6 Plus

Reviewed: November 2014, price: £619

It's the iPhone 6, but bigger. That's the only difference, and it comes with all of the ups and downs that you would expect from a phablet. You'll either love or hate the larger screen which, whilst still beautiful, is slightly less sharp than its little brother's. Similarly it might be tough for smaller hands to hold. But then you do get to see more things on screen at once. It's still a remarkable phone though, make no mistake.

OS iOS8	Connectivity 4G
Processor Apple A8 1.4GHz	Dimensions 158.1 x 77.8 x 7.1mm
Screen 5.5 inches	Weight 172g
Resolution 1920 x 1080 pixels	Battery 1,810 mAh
Memory 1GB RAM	
Storage 16GB/64GB/128GB	
Micro SD compatible? No	
Camera 8MP iSight rear-facing, 1.2MP front-facing	
Video 1080p	

VERDICT: A bigger iPhone 6 - it's really that simple. Prefer it or not, it's great regardless.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★★
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★★★



Archos 50 Helium

Reviewed: July 2014, price: £199

archos.com

If the Moto G and Moto E are the gold standard of entry-level and low-cost smartphones, then the 50 Helium is certainly worthy of silver. It's got a nice big screen as well as invaluable 4G capability. It won't set the world alight, but it's a standout in a market awash with cheap, limited handsets.

OS Android 4.3 Jelly Bean	Dimensions 145 x 71.5 x 8.95mm
Processor 1.2GHz quad-core	Weight 160g
Screen 5 inches	Battery 2,000 mAh
Resolution 1280 x 720 pixels	
Memory 1GB RAM	
Storage 8GB	
MicroSD Compatible? Yes	
Camera 8MP	
Video 1080p	
Connectivity 4G LTE	

VERDICT: A capable alternative to the market-leading Moto G.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★★
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★★★



BlackBerry Classic

Reviewed: April 2015, price: £330

uk.blackberry.com

BlackBerry diehards will love the modern touchscreen and keyboard – and even some actual apps, just like a proper smartphone. There are certainly worse handsets you could be issued at work. But there's nothing here to tempt an iPhone, Android or Windows user. For almost everyone other than BlackBerry fans, this phone is just a reminder of how far we've moved on in recent years.

OS BlackBerry OS 10.3.1	Video 1080p @ 30fps
Processor Dual-core 1.5GHz Krait	Connectivity 4G
Screen 3.5 inches	Dimensions 131 x 72.4 x 10.2mm
Resolution 720 x 720 pixels	Weight 177g
Memory 2GB RAM	Battery 2,515 mAh
Storage 16GB	
MicroSD compatible? Yes	
Rear camera 8MP	
Front camera 2MP	

VERDICT: Difficult to recommend to all but the most ardent of BlackBerry fans.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★★
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★★★





BlackBerry Passport

Reviewed: November 2014, price: £530
uk.blackberry.com

A premium device by anyone's standards - if you can look past the thoroughly odd design. Undeniably BlackBerry's most advanced device ever, it's still clearly angled towards the business crowd with a focus on productivity. The same old BlackBerry problems persist though, with an inferior OS and app store. It's just too impractical and limited for personal use.

OS BlackBerry 10.3
Processor 2.2GHz quad-core
Screen 4.5 inches
Resolution 1440 x 1440 pixels
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 32GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes, up to 128GB
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 128 x 90.3 x 9.3mm
Weight 194g
Battery 3,450 mAh

VERDICT: Premium build and top specs are betrayed by off-putting, strange design.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



BlackBerry Z30

Reviewed: June 2014, price: £500
uk.blackberry.com

Perhaps if BlackBerry had focused on its efforts on making a phone like this five years ago we would be looking at a very different picture now. As it stands, a barren app store, odd features and a monster price tag may kill what could have been a competitive device. It's still surprisingly easy on the eyes though, and its display doesn't look too bad either.

OS BlackBerry 10
Processor 1.7GHz dual-core
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 1280 x 720 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 140.7 x 72 x 9.4
Weight 170g
Battery 2,880 mAh

VERDICT: Possibly the best BlackBerry yet, but that's not saying an awful lot.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



BWC Stealth V2

Reviewed: August 2014, price: £300
www.bwcdevices.com

With good specs available at low prices there's never been a better time to pick up a rugged smartphone (if that's what you need). The Stealth V2 lives up to both the 'rugged' and 'smart' tags, with surprisingly capable insides. It also passed all of our stress tests, with countless drops, bashes and drownings failing to leave so much as a mark.

OS Android 4.2 Jelly Bean
Processor 1.2GHz quad-core
Screen 4 inches
Resolution 854 x 480 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 1GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 1.3MP front-facing
Video 720p
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 133 x 69 x 20mm
Weight 230g
Battery 2,800 mAh

VERDICT: As smart and tough as it promises.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





CAT B100

Reviewed: March 2014, price: £380
www.catphones.com

The CAT B100 withstands harsh conditions and jarring blows with a tough outer shell that absorbs the impact of falls, and impressive waterproofing. Beyond that, the phone lacks features games and apps - but chances are that's not why you're buying this phone. If you need a rugged handset to take adventuring, though, it's more than tough enough.

OS Nucleus 2.1
Processor 1GHz dual-core
Screen 2.2 inches
Resolution 240 x 320 pixels
Memory 512MB RAM
Storage 50MB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 3MP rear-facing, QVGA front-facing
Video QVGA

Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 122.94 x 55.88 x 7.6mm
Weight 136g
Battery 1,150 mAh

VERDICT: Tough enough to take into a warzone, if a little light on actual function.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Doro 820 Mini

Reviewed: May 2015, price: £169
www.doro.co.uk

The Doro 820 Mini's software is simple to use; first-time smartphone users and the elderly won't get confused by any cumbersome on-screen options. Unfortunately, this usability has been hampered by hardware problems. A slow processor creates annoying delays when navigating through the phone, whilst a poor build quality ruins what could have otherwise been a decent budget phone.

OS Android 4.1 Jelly Bean
Processor 1GHz dual-core
Screen 4 inches
Resolution 480 x 800 pixels
Memory 512MB RAM
Storage 4GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 5MP rear-facing, QVGA front-facing
Video 720p

Connectivity 3G
Size 125 x 69.5 x 14.95mm
Weight 170g
Battery 2,000 mAh

VERDICT: A rugged phone for those who need to rely on it in any environment.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Doro Liberto 810

Reviewed: April 2014, price: £145
www.doro.co.uk

The Liberto 810 has a comfortable design and a user interface that's ideal for first-time smartphone users and impaired customers. From there, things start to slip. The screen is buried into the handset, making it hard to accurately press smaller buttons, the camera software has some strange issues and we ran into a few bugs. It's a starting point for Doro, but it's hard to recommend it.

OS Android 4.1 Jelly Bean
Processor 1GHz
Screen 3.9 inches
Resolution 480 x 800 pixels
Memory 512MB RAM
Storage 500MB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 5MP
Video 480p
Connectivity 3G

Dimensions 126 x 66 x 12.5mm
Weight 132g
Battery 1,500 mAh

VERDICT: Seniors may be demanding a tailored smartphone, but this isn't it.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





Doro Liberto 820

Reviewed: February 2015, price: £186
www.doro.co.uk

It's easy to dismiss Doro phones as obsolete. This is to ignore that Doro isn't interested in attracting phone geeks and techno-fashionistas. These phones are for those value simplicity above processing power. Doro targets the 'senior' market. But with its SOS button and useful short cuts the Liberto 820 will appeal to those are not slaves to trends in consumer electronics.

OS Android 4.4 Kit Kat with Doro Wizard
Processor 1.3Ghz quad-core
Screen 5.5 inches
Resolution 940 x 560
Memory 1GB
Storage 4GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Camera 8MP
Video 720p

Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 13mm x 71mm
Weight 132g
Battery 1,900 mAh

VERDICT: A surprisingly well-featured phone for the more tech-savvy of seniors.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Doro PhoneEasy 624

Reviewed: February 2015, price: £100
www.doro.co.uk

The PhoneEasy 624 is Doro's best feature phone offering for those who want to keep things as simple, while making sure important contacts are only a button push away. It's got a 3G antenna, lengthy battery life, but a needlessly dire camera.

OS Custom
Processor N/A
Screen 2.4 inches
Resolution 320 x 240 pixels
Memory N/A
Storage N/A
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Camera 2MP
Video 720p
Connectivity 3G

Dimensions 102 x 52 x 19mm
Weight 104g
Battery 800 mAh

VERDICT: A well featured phone for the price if you're in the market for that sort of thing.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



EE Kestrel

Reviewed: September 2014, price: £99
www.doro.co.uk

The EE Kestrel is the best entry-level 4G handset on the market and this is in no small part due to Huawei. The manufacturer has built a solid handset that consumers will use beyond its 4G-LTE capability. Although, its weak resolution is a major flaw, it has plenty of other positive attributes including a smooth UI, the ability to handle a vast range of games and decent web and app browsing speeds.

OS Android 4.3 (Jelly Bean)
Processor 1.2GHz quad-core
Screen 4.5 inches
Resolution 540 x 960 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Camera 5MP rear-facing, 1MP front-facing
Video 1080p

Connectivity 4G, 3G
Dimensions 131 x 65.3 x 7.85mm
Weight 145g
Battery 2,000 mAh

VERDICT: A reliable handset that boasts good usability, if underwhelming specs.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





Google Nexus 6

Reviewed: March 2015, price: £499

www.google.com/nexus/6/

The Nexus 6 is a reminder of exactly what so many manufacturers are doing wrong by overly modifying Android. Google's flagship is a tremendous powerhouse - more of a media hub than a mere smartphone, and one of the best phablets on the market. Whether you'd rather it had a stylus is a matter of preference, though.



HTC Desire 816

Reviewed: October 2014, price: £300

www.htc.com/uk

In a market lacking a viable midrange phablet the HTC Desire 816 stands out. It might have its flaws, but for the price you can certainly look past them. If you can't, then a midrange device probably isn't for you. For the rest of us, there's no better option for getting your hands on a jumbo screen on the cheap.



HTC Desire 820

Reviewed: June 2015, price: £299

www.htc.com/uk

A large display, fantastic cameras and attractive design makes the HTC Desire 820 an ideal choice if you're after an affordable phone with plenty of features. It's only been let down by the fact that it doesn't pack an HD screen and that it doesn't run the latest Android software. It's also quite pricey compared to the OnePlus One; a phone that is a serious rival.

OS Android 5.0 Lollipop
Processor 2.7 GHz quad-core
Screen 5.96 inches
Resolution 2560 x 1440 pixels
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 32/64GB
Micro SD compatible? No
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Video 4K

Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 82.98mm x 159.26mm x 10.06mm
Weight 184g
Battery 3,220 mAh

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 1.6GHz quad-core
Screen 5.5 inches
Resolution 1280 x 720 pixels
Memory 1.5GB RAM
Storage 8GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 5MP front-facing
Video 1080p

Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 156.6 x 78.7 x 7.9mm
Weight 165g
Battery 2,600 mAh

OS Android 4.4.2 KitKat
Processor Quad-core 1.5 GHz Cortex-A53
Screen 5.5-inches
Resolution 720 x 1280 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Rear camera 13MP
Front camera 8MP

Video 1080p at 30fps
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 157.7 x 78.7 x 7.7mm
Weight 155g
Battery 2600 mAh

VERDICT: Fast, fresh and tremendously powerful. A dream for Android purists.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



VERDICT: A triumphant, large addition to a fantastic 2014 product line for HTC.

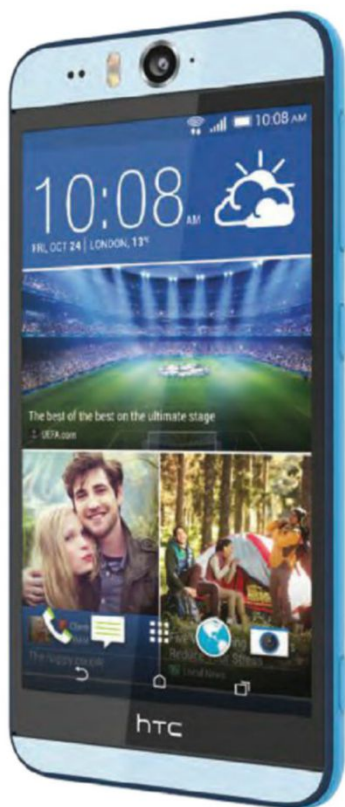
PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



VERDICT: Cheap, attractive and packed full of features.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





HTC Desire Eye

Reviewed: March 2015, price: £365
www.htc.com/uk

Whilst we love the cameras (having a front-facer as highly powered as the rear-facer is a huge boon, particularly for selfie-lovers) the Desire Eye's build quality and price make it a tougher sell than you might think. It does look nice though, and is an interesting concept. Just not a 100% successful one.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 2.3GHz quad-core
Screen 5.2 inches
Resolution 1080 x 1920 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 13MP front-facing
Video 1080p

Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 151.7 x 73.8 x 8.5mm
Weight 154g
Battery 2,400 mAh

VERDICT: A hard sell when the superior One M8 can now be bought for the same price.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



HTC One M8

Reviewed: May 2014, price: £530
www.htc.com/uk

The HTC One M8 is, in all probability, the best smartphone ever made. It both looks and performs better than almost everything else out there. Features like Blinkfeed and knock-to-wake are a joy to use. If Apple, Sony and Samsung weren't paying attention before, they certainly are now.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 2.3GHz quad-core
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 1920 x 1080 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB or 32GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 4MP UltraPixel rear-facing, 5MP front-facing
Video 1080p

Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 146.36 x 70.6 x 9.35mm
Weight 160g
Battery 2,600 mAh

VERDICT: If you can afford it, buy it. There's no better Android handset on the market.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



HTC One M9

Reviewed: May 2015, price: £580
www.htc.com/uk

The One M9 is HTC's first major release of 2015 and its top-notch build quality, powerful processor and phenomenal battery life makes it one of our favourite phones of this year. However, it doesn't really provide anything different to what flagship rivals like the iPhone 6 already offers. Despite that, the HTC One M9 is still one of the best looking and most powerful phones on the market.

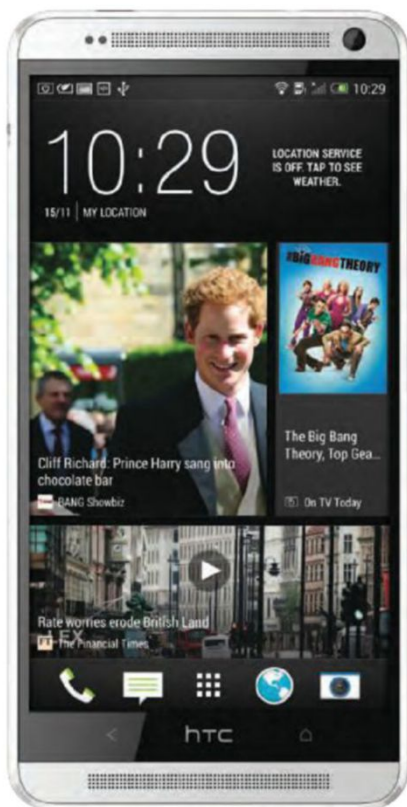
OS Android 5.0 Lollipop
Processor 4 x 2GHz + 4 x 1.5GHz octa-core
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 1920 x 1080 pixels
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 32GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 20.7MP rear-facing, 4MP UltraPixel front-facing

Video 4k
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 144.6 x 69.7 x 9.61mm
Weight 157g
Battery 2,840 mAh

VERDICT: It has no unique selling point, but it's still one of the best devices out there.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





HTC One Max

Reviewed: January 2014, price: £599
www.htc.com/uk

The HTC One Max piggybacks the reputation of the HTC One, although nothing much has improved. The high-quality display is present but HTC has failed to add processing power and the fingerprint sensor implementation is very disappointing.

OS Android 4.3 Jelly Bean
Processor 1.7GHz quad-core
Screen 5.9 inches
Resolution 1920 x 1080 pixels
Memory 2GB
Storage 16GB or 32GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 4MP UltraPixel rear-facing, 2.1MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 164.5 x 82.5 x 10.3mm
Weight 217g
Battery 3,300 mAh

VERDICT: The HTC One's design is still a standout but there's nothing new here.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



HTC One Mini 2

Reviewed: August 2014, price: £360
www.htc.com/uk

Your opinion of the One Mini 2 will come down to what you mostly use your phone for. If you don't put too much strain on its struggling processor then you should be fine. It's got a magnificent pair of cameras, and that trademark HTC metal unibody build can't be beat. Day-to-day users will be more than satisfied - hardcore tech-heads should stick with the One M8.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 1.2GHz quad-core
Screen 4.5 inches
Resolution 720 x 1,280 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 16GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 5MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 137.4 x 64 x 10.6mm
Weight 137g
Battery 2,110 mAh

VERDICT: Powered to match its stature, but still a very polished, attractive device.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Huawei Ascend G7

Reviewed: May 2015, price: £205
www.huaweidevice.co.uk

With a large screen and the gorgeous looks that remind us of the iPhone 6; the Huawei Ascend G7 might look good on the outside, but the software is another story. Huawei has redesigned Google's vanilla Android operating system and reskinned it as something that looks both cheap and ugly. Despite that, the Ascend G7 is a decent choice if you want an iPhone 6-lookalike that runs Android software.

OS Android 4.4.2 KitKat
Processor 1.2 GHz quad-core
Screen 5.5 inches
Resolution 720 x 1280 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 5MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 153.5 x 77.3 x 7.6mm
Weight 165g
Battery 3,000 mAh

VERDICT: Its great performance is ruined cheap and ugly looking operating system.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





Huawei Ascend P7

Reviewed: July 2014, price: £365

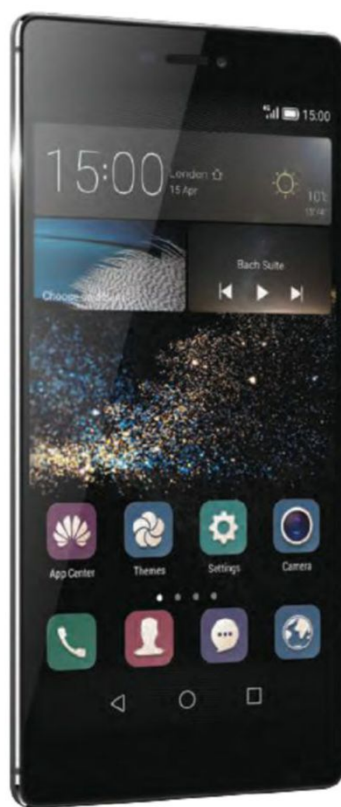
www.huaweidevice.co.uk

The Ascend P7 feels like a missed opportunity. Huawei should have put its full weight into creating a top-level flagship handset. However, its underpowered processor is its only real flaw. It looks premium, and its front-facing camera is the best on the market. Its price could be a sticking point, but it's by no means a bad device.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 1.8GHz quad-core
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 1920 x 1080 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 8MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G LTE
Dimensions 139.8 x 68.8 x 6.5mm
Weight 124g
Battery 2,500 mAh

VERDICT: It's not quite a market-leading flagship, but at least it looks the part.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Huawei P8

Reviewed: August 2015, price: £395

www.huaweidevice.co.uk

An attractive device that gives you top-of-the-range specs and a fantastic camera for half the price of the Samsung Galaxy S6 or iPhone. The performance isn't as slick as its major rivals, but that isn't a deal breaker. Especially when the phone costs half the price of the iPhone 6 and Samsung Galaxy S6.

OS Android 5.0 Lollipop
Processor 2 GHz quad-core
Screen 5.2 inches
Resolution 1920 x 1080 pixels
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 16/64GB
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 8MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 144 x 72 x 6.4mm
Weight 144g
Battery 2,680 mAh

VERDICT: Flagship specs for half the price of a Galaxy S6 or iPhone.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Huawei Honor 4x

Reviewed: August 2015, price: £144.99

www.huaweidevice.co.uk

An affordable phone that offers solid battery life and plenty of features. The build quality even feels better than the LG G4, a smartphone that costs double its recommended retail price. Honor isn't a big name over in the West, but phones like the 4X are helping it head in that direction. It's just a shame that the processor is a little on the weak side.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor HiSilicon Kirin 620
Screen 4 inches
Resolution 1280 x 720 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 8GB
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 5MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 153 x 77 x 8.7mm
Weight 165g
Battery 3,000 mAh

VERDICT: A solid phone at a bargain price, you'll be surprised at how good it looks.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





Huawei Honor 6+

Reviewed: July 2015, price: £299.99
www.huaweidevice.co.uk

If you're after an affordable device with plenty of top-notch features, you can't really go wrong with the Huawei Honor 6+. The camera is unique, the performance is fantastic and battery life is better than more expensive phones. Its slow camera and inability to handle certain apps are only minor negatives - the Honor 6+ is well worth the money.

OS Android KitKat 4.4.2
Processor Kirin octo-core 925
Screen 5.5 inches
Resolution 1920 x 1080 pixels
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 32GB
Camera Dual 8MP rear-facing, 8MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G

Dimensions 151x76x7.5mm
Weight 165g
Battery 3,600 mAh

VERDICT: A flagship phone with excellent battery life that doesn't break the bank.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Kazam Tornado 348

Reviewed: March 2015, price: £247
www.kazam.mobi

Despite great looks and smooth performance, lack of 4G connectivity and storage makes the Tornado 348 something of a non-starter for serious users. The casual market will be plenty content with what's on offer here - particularly those eye-catching physical dimensions.

OS Android KitKat 4.4
Processor 1.7Ghz octa-core
Screen 4.8 inches
Resolution 1280x720 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 16GB
Micro SD compatible? No
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 5MP front-facing
Video 720p

Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 139.8 x 67.5 x 5.15mm
Weight 95.5g
Battery 2,050 mAh

VERDICT: Standout design and performance at an attractive price.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Kazam Thunder Q4.5

Reviewed: April 2014, price: £TBC
www.kazam.mobi

The Thunder Q4.5 is a sure case of style over substance, but in the lower-cost end of the market you'd usually be lucky to get either. While the phone lacks standout features it won't let you down when it comes to everyday smartphone functionality. If you're in the market and want to try something new, you could certainly do an awful lot worse.

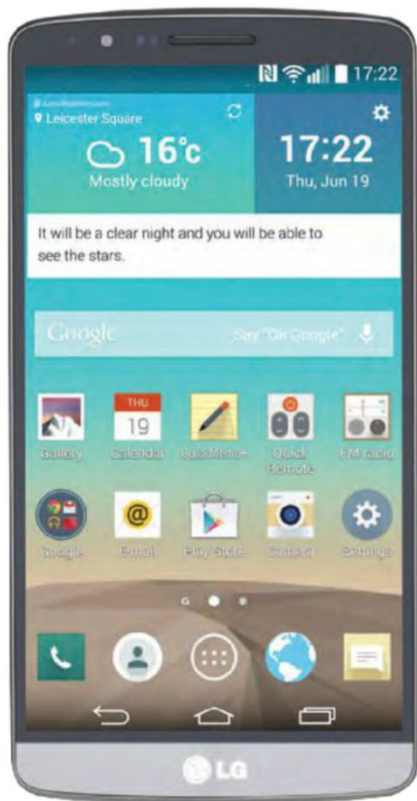
OS Android 4.2 Jelly Bean
Processor 1.3GHz quad-core
Screen 4.5 inches
Resolution 854 x 480 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 1.74GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Video 720p

Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 136 x 64.6 x 8.9mm
Weight 137g
Battery 1,800 mAh

VERDICT: It may be flawed, but at this price point you'd be hard pushed to beat it.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





LG G3

Reviewed: August 2014, price: £499
www.lg.com/uk

Only minor detractors stop the LG G3 from being the perfect smartphone. That said, there's no such thing as the perfect smartphone just yet, so the G3 is still a wonderful piece of kit. It has outstanding features, hardware, and form to boot. The best display around, a monstrous processor and a variety of little touches all make the G3 a special smartphone.

OS Android 4.4 (KitKat)
Processor 2.5GHz quad-core
Screen 5.5 inches
Resolution 1440 x 2560 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB or 32GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 2.1MP front-facing
Video 2160p

Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 146.3 x 74.6 x 8.9mm
Weight 149g
Battery 3,000 mAh

VERDICT: Want the best? The G3 is absolutely deserving of your consideration.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



LG G4

Reviewed: July 2015, price: £500
www.lg.com/uk

The unique leather design and incredible camera certainly helps the LG G4 stand out against rivals like the iPhone 6. However, the fact it doesn't have the strongest processor on the market, alongside an average battery and awkward button placement, means it doesn't really stand up as a true iPhone and Galaxy smasher.

OS Android 5.1 Lollipop
Processor 1.4GHz quad core
Screen 5.5 inches
Resolution 2560 x 1440 pixels
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 32GB
Camera 16MP rear-facing, 8MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G

Dimensions 149x76x9.8mm
Weight 155g
Battery 3,000 mAh

VERDICT: A monster device let down by a weak processor. Not a Galaxy S6 killer.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



LG G Flex

Reviewed: April 2014, price: £570
www.lg.com/uk

The curved display may add very little, but with a state-of-the-art spec sheet and a fantastic display, the LG G Flex nails the basics of a high-end smartphone. However the £570 price and so-so camera make it difficult to recommend - at least when compared to its cheaper, better rivals. The Flex just isn't the innovation LG believe it to be.

OS Android 4.2 Jelly Bean
Processor 2.2GHz quad-core
Screen 6 inches
Resolution 1280 x 720 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 32GB
MicroSD Compatible? No
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 2.1MP front-facing
Video 1080p

Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 160.5 x 81.6 x 7.9mm
Weight 177g
Battery 3,500 mAh

VERDICT: A powerful phone held back by a steep price for an unnecessary gimmick.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





LG Spirit 4G

Reviewed: August 2015, price: £129.99
www.lg.com/uk

At only £129.99, there's little to criticise in this budget mid-range device that looks a lot like a shrunken down LG G4. It has enough performance for most users and comes with Android 5.0 right out of the box. The only problem is the weak front and rear cameras which distract from an otherwise competent package.

OS Android 5.1 Lollipop
Processor 1.3 Ghz quad-core
Screen 4.7 inches
Resolution 1280 x 720
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 1MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G

Dimensions 133x66x10mm
Weight 124g
Battery 2,100 mAh

VERDICT: A competent mid-range device with Android Lollipop and good specs.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Motorola Moto E (2015)

Reviewed: May 2015, price: £109
www.motorola.co.uk

Paying £109 for a full-blown, powerful 4G smartphone is seriously good value for money. This value is only increased by a high-quality camera, powerful processor and excellent battery life. The only major faults we found when testing the phone included no LED camera flash, a plastic body that easily picks up marks and a fiddly SIM-card slot.

OS Android 5.0.2 Lollipop
Processor Qualcomm Snapdragon 410, 1.2 GHz quad-core
Screen 4.5 inches
Resolution 540 X 960 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 5MP rear-facing,

640 x 480 front-facing
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 129.9 x 66.8mm, 146g
Weight 145g
Battery 2,390 mAh

VERDICT: After a smartphone that's seriously good value? This is for you.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Motorola Moto G

Reviewed: January 2014, price: £135
www.motorola.co.uk

The Moto G is a budget smartphone done right. It makes smart and sensible sacrifices to slash its price to a point that puts its rivals to shame. For people who don't demand the highest specs and best camera from a phone, the Moto G's easy-to-use system and fast speeds make it an ideal choice.

OS Android 4.3 Jelly Bean
Processor 1.2GHz quad-core
Screen 4.5 inches
Resolution 720 x 1280 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB/16GB
MicroSD Compatible? No
Camera 5MP rear-facing, 1.3MP front-facing
Video 720p

Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 129.9 x 65.9 x 11.6mm
Weight 143g
Battery 2,070 mAh

VERDICT: The best option for customers on a budget.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





Motorola Moto G (2014)

Reviewed: November 2014, price: £150
www.motorola.co.uk

It's an updated version of the Moto G - nothing more, nothing less. The lack of 4G is extremely disappointing, and a processor upgrade would have been nice. Still, a bigger screen, a better camera and microSD compatibility is extremely welcome. When it comes to affordable phones that can actually perform, the Moto G is still untouchable.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 1.2GHz quad-core
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 1280 x 720 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB/16GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes, up to 32GB
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Video 720p
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 141.5 x 70.7 x 11mm
Weight 149g
Battery 2,070 mAh

VERDICT: A solid improvement on the best, but no 4G gives it a limited shelf life.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Motorola Moto G 4G

Reviewed: June 2015, price: £150
www.motorola.co.uk

One of the best value smartphones on the market, the large display, 4G connectivity and latest Android operating software makes it well worth the price. Combine all of this with the phone's fantastic build quality and the Motorola Moto G 4G is well worth keeping after your contract expires.

OS Android 5.0 Lollipop
Processor Quad-core 1.2 GHz Cortex-A53
Screen 5.0-inches
Resolution 720 x 1280 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8/16GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Rear camera 8MP
Front camera 2MP
Video 720p at 30fps
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 141.5 x 70.7 x 11mm
Weight 155g
Battery 2390 mAh

VERDICT: Priced between £200 - £400, this smartphone undermines the competition.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Motorola Moto X

Reviewed: March 2014, price: £380
www.motorola.co.uk

The Moto X is a rock-solid handset with unique, helpful features. This is the best place to experience Google Now, making voice operation genuinely useful. Mix in a sleek design, great camera and long battery life and the £380 price tag is justified. If you can afford the extra £150 then it makes for a sterling upper-mid tier upgrade to the Motorola Moto G.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 1.7GHz dual-core
Screen 4.7 inches
Resolution 720 x 1280 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB/32GB
MicroSD Compatible? No
Camera 10MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 129.3 x 65.3 x 10.4mm
Weight 130g
Battery 2,200 mAh

VERDICT: For those looking to step up from the budget tier: your search is over.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





Motorola Moto X (2014)

Reviewed: January 2015, price: £420
www.motorola.co.uk

Motorola's original Moto X was a nice idea executed a little too late, especially in the UK. Competition from superior phones from manufacturers with a stronger recent track record was too great to overcome. But this latest version of the Moto X makes a much stronger case for your cash. It's got some excellent features and will surely be beloved by hardcore fans of stock Android.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 2.5GHz quad-core
Screen 5.2 inches
Resolution 1,080 x 1,920 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16/32GB
MicroSD compatible? No
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Video 2160p

Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 140.8 x 72.4 x 10mm
Weight 144g
Battery 2,300 mAh

VERDICT: The best Motorola ever, and arguably the best Android handset of 2014.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★★
USABILITY ★★★★★
DESIGN ★★★★★



Nokia Asha 503

Reviewed: February 2014, price: £70
www.microsoft.com/en-gb/mobile/

Nokia's Asha 503 is a brilliantly tiny handset that stays usable despite the smaller screen. If you want a dirt-cheap phone then you might be better off with a sub-£50 handset and its design is a little spiky. But anyone looking for a phone to keep them busy for five minutes on a bus will find plenty to love here.

OS Nokia Asha platform 1.2
Processor N/A
Screen 3 inches
Resolution 240 x 320 pixels
Memory 128MB RAM
Storage 4GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 5MP rear-facing
Video QVGA
Connectivity 3G

Dimensions 102.6 x 60.6 x 12.7mm
Weight 110.2g
Battery 1,200 mAh

VERDICT: A good entry into the budget market that offers more than the basics.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★★
USABILITY ★★★★★
DESIGN ★★★★★



Nokia Lumia 435

Reviewed: September 2015, price: £40
www.microsoft.com/en-gb/mobile/

It won't shake the world but for 40 quid you can hardly expect it to. This is a very cheap phone that has all the features you would expect from more expensive handsets. While it doesn't excel in any particular area and the camera is pretty terrible, you'll be lucky if you find anything that performs this well for the price. A genuine bargain.

OS Windows Phone 8.1
Processor 1.2GHz dual-core
Screen 4 inches
Resolution 800 x 480
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Cameras 2MP rear-facing, VGA front-facing
Video 480p

Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 118 x 65 x 11.7mm
Weight 131g
Battery 1,560 mAh

VERDICT: A bargain-bin handset that still manages to run Windows Phone very well.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★★
USABILITY ★★★★★
DESIGN ★★★★★





Nokia Lumia 625

Reviewed: October 2013, price: £180
www.microsoft.com/en-gb/mobile/

The sizeable 4.7-inch screen saves the 625 from its disappointingly short battery life and lack of HD viewing. It's plagued further by the Lumia range's other issues like a limited app store, but fights back with a decent camera. As a result it stands as a viable budget-range phone.

OS Windows Phone 8
Processor 1.2GHz dual-core
Screen 4.7 inches
Resolution 480 x 800 pixels
Memory 512 MB RAM
Storage 8GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 5MP rear-facing, VGA front-facing
Video 1080p

Connectivity 4G-LTE
Dimensions 133.3 x 72.3 x 9.2mm
Weight 159g
Battery 2,000 mAh

VERDICT: A decent budget smartphone with its fair share of shortcomings.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Nokia Lumia 640

Reviewed: August 2015, price: £109.99
www.microsoft.com/en-gb/mobile/

It's incredible what Microsoft has managed to cram into such a cheap, inconspicuous phone. They've nailed all the major points internally, with a great camera, excellent battery and an adequate processor for the well-optimised Windows Phone OS. The only problem is Windows Phone itself, which still struggles to convince the sceptics.

OS Windows Phone 8.1 GDR2
Processor 1.2GHz quad-core
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 1280 x 720
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 1MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G

Dimensions 141 x 72 x 8.8mm
Weight 145g
Battery 2,500 mAh

VERDICT: A brilliant battery and solid performance make this a bargain device.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Nokia Lumia 640 XL

Reviewed: September 2015, price: £180
www.microsoft.com/en-gb/mobile/

Although it's more expensive than the 640, you get the advantage of a much bigger screen and some seriously good battery life. The camera has also gotten a bump too, producing some excellent images for this price-point. It's just a shame that the processor hasn't been improved to complement them.

OS Windows Phone 8.1 GDR2
Processor 1.2GHz quad-core
Screen 5.7 inches
Resolution 1280 x 720 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 5MP front-facing
Video 1080p

Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 157.9 x 81.5 x 9mm
Weight 171g
Battery 3,000 mAh

VERDICT: Not a huge leap up but the camera and battery are worth the money.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





Nokia Lumia 735

Reviewed: December 2014, price: £299
www.microsoft.com/en-gb/mobile/

Microsoft has produced a genuine rival to the bestselling Motorola Moto G in the form of the Lumia 735. With the introduction of an HD display and 4G LTE this is much more than just another selfie phone. But if selfies are what you're after the Lumia 735 offers plenty of fun ways to snap images of you and your friends with its 5-megapixel front camera.

OS Windows Phone 8.1
Processor 1.2GHz quad-core
Screen 4.7 inches
Resolution 1,280 x 720 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Camera 6.7MP rear-facing, 5MP front-facing
Video 1080p

Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 134.7 x 68.5 x 8.9mm
Weight 134g
Battery 2,200 mAh

VERDICT: A Windows Phone to match the Moto G, the 735 is a selfie star.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Nokia Lumia 830

Reviewed: March 2015, price: £267
www.microsoft.com/en-gb/mobile/

The Nokia Lumia 830 is not quite the swan-song we were hoping for. It's not hugely affordable, and nor does the phone's hardware make full use of that 4G connectivity. Mid-range mobiles seldom convince us of their reason to exist and this final Nokia is no exception. It does look the part, and Cortana is improving, but there are simply better options out there.

OS Windows Phone 8.1
Processor 1.2GHz quad-core
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 720 x 1280 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 16GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes, up to 128GB
Camera 10MP rear-facing, 0.9MP front-facing

Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 139.4 x 70.7 x 8.5mm
Weight 150g
Battery 2,200 mAh

VERDICT: Underpowered and overpriced, the Lumia 830 is average and forgettable.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Nokia Lumia 925

Reviewed: August 2013, price: £479
www.microsoft.com/en-gb/mobile/

With the Lumia 925 Nokia haven't set out to reinvent the wheel, they've just built on their past achievements to put together a brilliant phone. A gorgeous slimmed-down design, high performance camera and responsive user interface all set this handset apart from the rest of the Lumia range and make it a top level device in the high-end smartphone market. One of the best out there.

OS Windows Phone 8
Processor 1.5GHz dual-core
Screen 4.5 inches
Resolution 1280 x 760
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 16GB/32GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 1.3MP front-facing
Video 1080p

Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 129 x 70.6 x 8.5mm
Weight 139g
Battery 2,000 mAh

VERDICT: A fantastic camera, slick design and great user interface make this top dog.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





Nokia Lumia 930

Reviewed: September 2014, price: £420
www.microsoft.com/en-gb/mobile/

The plus side for those looking for something different is that Windows Phone has come along enough now that its mere presence on a handset isn't enough to relegate it completely. The Lumia 930 is the flagship that the range has been crying out for for far too long now, and if you don't mind having a relatively restricted ecosystem then you should have very few issues with it.

OS Windows Phone 8.1
Processor 2.2GHz quad-core
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 1920 x 1080 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 32GB
Micro SD compatible? No
Camera 20MP rear-facing, 1.2MP front-facing

Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G LTE
Dimensions 137 x 71 x 9.8mm
Weight 167g
Battery 2,420 mAh

VERDICT: The closest to rivalling Android and iOS that Windows Phone has ever come.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Nokia Lumia 1020

Reviewed: November 2013, price: £639.99
www.microsoft.com/en-gb/mobile/

The Lumia 1020 is an ideal smartphone for those of you who don't care about apps and it's perfect if you love to take great pictures. It might not be the slimmest device you can get your hands on but the 1020's powerful camera is well worth the extra bulk.

OS Windows Phone 8
Processor 1.5GHz dual-core
Screen 4.5 inches
Resolution 1280 x 760
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 32GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 41MP rear-facing, 1.2MP front-facing
Video: 1080p

Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 130.4 x 71.4 x 10.4mm
Weight: 158g
Battery 2,000 mAh battery

VERDICT: A top smartphone with an astounding camera – one of the best.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Nokia Lumia 1320

Reviewed: April 2014, price: £280
www.microsoft.com/en-gb/mobile/

The Lumia 925 and 1020 were large enough, and the lack of software taking advantage of the big display, unlike with the Samsung Galaxy Note, means those extra inches just leave you looking faintly ridiculous when answering a call. You're better off spending your money on an Android phablet or Google's Nexus 5.

OS Windows Phone 8
Processor 1.7GHz dual-core
Screen 6 inches
Resolution 1280 x 720 pixels
Memory 1GB
Storage 8GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 5MP rear-facing, VGA front-facing
Video 1080p

Connectivity 4G-LTE
Dimensions 164.2 x 85.9 x 9.8mm
Weight 220g
Battery 3,400 mAh

VERDICT: A good phone, but the Nexus 5 simply undercuts the competition too well.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





Nokia Lumia 1520

Reviewed: February 2014, price: £550
www.microsoft.com/en-gb/mobile/

Although the Nokia Lumia 1520 weighs in at a whopping £550 (SIM-free), it could cost you considerably more to purchase a standalone camera, camcorder, satnav, tablet and a laptop computer that can run Microsoft Office.



OnePlus One

Reviewed: June 2015, price: £269
www.oneplus.net

If you're not bothered about Samsung, Apple or any of the other big brand names, then we highly recommend the OnePlus One. It offers class-leading specs for half the price of an iPhone 6 or Samsung Galaxy S6. That attractive price is topped off by excellent build quality and unlimited customisation options.



Prestigio MultiPhone 5430

Reviewed: November 2013, price: £190
www.prestigio.com

The Prestigio MultiPhone 5430 is a bland piece of kit that lacks any real highlights, but is undoubtedly a capable and efficient smartphone. Perhaps its best feature is that it gets the core experience right, if not groundbreakingly so. The very basics of what you expect from a smartphone in 2013 are here but there isn't much else.

OS Windows Phone 8
Processor 2.2GHz quad-core
Screen 6 inches
Resolution 1920 x 1080 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 32GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 20MP rear-facing, 1.2MP front-facing
Video 1080p

Connectivity 4G-LTE
Dimensions 162.8 x 85.4 x 8.7mm
Weight 209g
Battery 3,200 mAh

OS Cyanogenmod version of Android 4.4
Processor 2.5GHz quad-core Qualcomm Snapdragon 801
Screen 5.5 inches Gorilla Glass 3
Resolution 1920 x 1080
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 64GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes

Rear camera 13MP
Front camera 5MP
Connectivity 4G, dual-band wi-fi, Bluetooth 4.0, NFC, GOS antenna
Video 1080 HD
Dimensions 152.9 x 75.9 x 8.9mm
Weight 162g
Battery 3100 mAh

OS Android 4.0 Ice Cream Sandwich
Processor Intel Atom 1.2GHz
Screen 4.3 inches
Resolution 1920 x 1080 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 4GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 0.3MP front-facing

Video 1080p
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 126 x 64.7 x 10mm
Weight 140g
Battery 2,000 mAh

VERDICT: A great all-in-one device that mashes the best of Nokia together.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



VERDICT: A top-spec smartphone for half the price of the iPhone 6? Yes please!

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



VERDICT: Perfectly ordinary – but it's positioned as an everyday smartphone.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





Prestigio 4500 DUO

Reviewed: June 2013, price: £179
www.prestigio.com

The Prestigio fails to dazzle, offering nothing fresh, but it is a user friendly, well featured and well priced device that ticks all the right boxes for a smartphone. It offers a smooth Android experience in a classic design with a competitive price tag and could go up against the likes of Huawei or HTC's budget brands. A solid offering from a lesser known brand.

OS Android 2.3 Gingerbread
Processor 1.2GHz dual-core
Screen 3.5 inches
Resolution 480 x 800 pixels
Memory 512MB RAM
Storage 4GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 5MP rear-facing, VGA front-facing
Video 480p

Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 117 x 59 x 11mm
Weight 120g
Battery 1,850 mAh

VERDICT: Nothing new but this is a user friendly, well priced well featured device.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Samsung Galaxy A7

Reviewed: July 2015, price: £319.99
www.samsung.com/uk

The Samsung Galaxy A7 is an attractive proposition, But looks aren't everything. The cheaper £269 OnePlus One offers more power, a similar screen size and up-to-date software. And the £129 Vodafone Smart 4 Max with a bigger screen is less than half the price. If it's about power, not just looking powerful, perhaps look elsewhere.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 1.5GHz Quad-core
Screen 5.5-inches
Resolution 1080 x 1920 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB
Camera 13MP
Video Yes
Connectivity 3G

Dimensions 151 x 76.2 x 6.3mm
Weight 141g
Battery 2,600 mAh

VERDICT: An attractive device, but it has less power than similar devices.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Samsung Galaxy Ace 3

Reviewed: March 2014, price: £180
www.samsung.com/uk

The Samsung Galaxy Ace 3 is a good handset that's been made irrelevant by cheaper competition. Whilst it packs a vibrant display and solid specs, similar phones sit well below the £180 benchmark set here. Samsung will have to rethink its pricing. If it weren't for the Moto G's release this would be an emphatic recommendation - unfortunately Samsung will have to settle for the silver medal.

OS Android 4.2 Jelly Bean
Processor 1.2GHz dual-core
Screen 4 inches
Resolution 480 x 800 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB/16GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 5MP rear-facing, VGA front-facing
Video 720p

Connectivity 4G LTE
Dimensions 121.2 x 62.7 x 9.8mm
Weight 115g
Battery 1,500 mAh

VERDICT: Premium build quality and visuals at a good price - just not a great one.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





Samsung Galaxy K Zoom

Reviewed: October 2014, price: £400
www.samsung.com/uk

We can see what Samsung set out to achieve with the Galaxy K zoom, and creating a solid Android smartphone with an optical zoom is no small feat. However, it looks like a dated digital camera at best - newer devices are much more compact. If you're after a smartphone with a solid snapper, we'd advise you to seek out the LG G3 or Sony Xperia Z2 instead.

OS Android 4.4 (KitKat) **Video** 1080p
Processor Hexa-core: 1.3GHz quad-core + 1.7GHz dual-core **Connectivity** 4G
Screen 4.8 inches **Dimensions** 137.5 x 70.8 x 16.6mm
Resolution 1,280 x 720 pixels **Weight** 200g
Memory 2GB RAM **Battery** 2,430 mAh
Storage 8GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Camera 20.7MP rear-facing, 2MP front

VERDICT: A decent smartphone and an excellent camera in a hideous body.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Samsung Galaxy Mega

Reviewed: October 2013, price: £440
www.samsung.com/uk

With a 6.3-inch screen, the Galaxy Mega falls into phablet territory, but that doesn't change the fact that said screen is hypnotically vibrant. As such, it's a great video player and has room for a sizeable battery. Its resolution, however, is a minor issue and it doesn't have enough internal storage to meet our needs. It will stick out like a sore thumb but you might just fall in love with it.

OS Android 4.2 Jelly Bean **Connectivity** 4G LTE
Processor 1.7GHz quad-core **Dimensions** 167.6 x 88 x 8mm
Screen 6.3 inches **Weight** 199g
Resolution 720 x 1280 pixels **Battery** 3,200 mAh
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 8GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 1.9MP front-facing
Video 1080p

VERDICT: For better or worse it's all about the big, vibrant screen with this handset.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Samsung Galaxy Note 3

Reviewed: December 2013, price: £649
www.samsung.com/uk

The Note 3 steps over the competition with its large, engulfing display and great battery life. But it's the stylus that's the star of the show here, with great integration that makes it an ideal Note-keeping device. This makes it ideal for business people on the move, although they'll have to make sure they keep an eye on the easy-to-lose pen at all times.

OS Android 4.3 Jelly Bean **Dimensions** 151.2 x 79.2 x 8.3mm
Processor 2.3GHz quad-core **Weight** 168g
Screen 5.7 inches **Battery** 3,200 mAh
Resolution 1080 x 1920 pixels
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 16/32/64GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 13MP front-facing, 2MP rear-facing
Video 4K

VERDICT: A fantastic portable business device with helpful, unique features.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





Samsung Galaxy Note 4

Reviewed: December 2013, price: £498
www.samsung.com/uk

This year's effort ensures the Note remains top of the phablet pile, but unless you're particularly taken with the stylus and split-screen app combo, you shouldn't discount the latest flagship phones. The LG G3 and new Motorola Moto X are stunning devices, only slightly smaller in size and power. Unless you've got a thing for faux leather, that is, in which case the Note 4 is the best gadget ever made.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 2.7GHz quad-core
Screen 5.7 inches
Resolution 1,440 x 2,560-pixels
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 32GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Camera 16MP rear-facing, 3.7MP front-facing

Video 2160p at 30fps
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 153.5 x 78.6 x 8.5mm
Weight 176g
Battery 3,220 mAh

VERDICT: Still king of the phablets, but not by such a distance this time around.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Samsung Galaxy Note Edge

Reviewed: April 2015, price: £610
www.samsung.com/uk

The Samsung Galaxy Note Edge points to an exciting future when we no longer have to accept that a smartphone screen has to be rectangular. As is often the case with a new technology, though, it needs more work. As cool as the edge looks, it serves little purpose, other than to make this a more expensive Note 4. Call us when the screen wraps all the way around, Samsung.

OS Android 4.4.4 KitKat
Processor Quad-core 2.7GHz Krait 450
Screen 5.6-inches
Resolution 1,600 x 2,560 pixels
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 32/64GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes
Camera 16MP rear-facing,

3.7MP front-facing
Video 4K @ 60fps
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 151.3 x 82.4 x 8.3mm
Weight 174g
Battery 3,000 mAh

VERDICT: A worthwhile endeavour - for Samsung's engineers, not the consumer.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Samsung Galaxy S3

Reviewed: July 2012, price: £485
www.samsung.com/uk

Matching up to the mighty Galaxy S II was always going to be a tall order, but with the release of the Galaxy S III Samsung has clearly surpassed expectations. With its stunning design, amazing usability, high-powered performance and cutting-edge features, it measures up to the best of the competition and sets a new benchmark for its rivals. If you're looking for one of the best smartphones you can buy, this is it.

OS Android 4.0 Ice Cream Sandwich
Processor 1.4GHz ARM Cortex-A9
Screen 4.8 inches
Resolution 720 x 1280 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 16/32/64GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes

Camera 8MP rear-facing, 1.9MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G LTE
Size 137 x 71 x 9mm
Weight 133g
Battery 2,100 mAh

VERDICT: A masterpiece of design and usability. This is the benchmark to beat.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





Samsung Galaxy S3 Mini

Reviewed: January 2013, price: £300
www.samsung.com/uk

Something of a misnomer, this is no relation to its bigger brother, the S III, despite the design similarities. The Mini is little more than a shrunk down Galaxy S II. If users want a budget Galaxy, they are better off pursuing that (former) flagship on a budget plan - this is extortionately expensive for what you get.

OS Android 4.1 Jelly Bean
Processor 1GHz dual-core
Screen 4 inches
Resolution 480 x 800 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8/16GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 5MP rear-facing, 0.3MP front-facing
Video 720p

Connectivity 3G
Dimensions: 121.6 x 63 x 9.9mm
Weight 111.5g
Battery 1,500 mAh

VERDICT: A cheeky move by Samsung to pass this off as a premium device. It's not.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Samsung Galaxy S4

Reviewed: July 2012, price: £550
www.samsung.com/uk

An impressive hardware offering with intriguing new software and camera features but these need to be perfected and integrated into the device as a whole before the S4 can really be called a knock out. While the phone's processor seemed to struggle with games and the design is pretty similar to the S3, this is a solid offering from Samsung in the flagship race.

OS Android 4.2 Jelly Bean
CPU 1.6 GHz quad-core
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 1080 x 1920 pixels
Memory 512MB RAM
Storage 16/32/64GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Cameras 13MP front-facing, 2MP front-facing
Video 1080p

Connectivity 4G LTE
Dimensions 136.6 x 69.8 x 7.9mm
Weight 130g
Battery 2,600 mAh

VERDICT: An impressive offering with interesting but not integrated new software.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Samsung Galaxy S4 Active

Reviewed: November 2013, price: £400
www.samsung.com/uk

The Active S4 is ideal for people looking for a more protected smartphone, although it does make some sacrifices. Its design is too rugged for mainstream appeal and its display and camera aren't great. But it's a great hybrid for an underwater camera and is perfect for adventurous lifestyles.

OS Android 4.2.2 Jelly Bean
Processor 1.9 GHz quad-core
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 1080 x 1920 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Video 1080p

Connectivity 4G LTE
Dimensions 139.7 x 71.3 x 9.1mm
Weight 151g
Battery 2,600 mAh

VERDICT: It may not be quite as good as its big brother, but it certainly has its purpose.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





Samsung Galaxy S5

Reviewed: June 2014, price: £530

www.samsung.com/uk

The thing about Galaxy handsets is that their flaws are often matters of personal opinion. If you don't mind the samey design, plasticky build and irksome user interface, then the Galaxy S5 could be the best smartphone going. It's insanely powerful, has a blinding display and is even waterproof. If you care about substance over style then the Galaxy S5 is as good as it gets.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 2.5GHz quad-core
Screen 5.1 inches
Resolution 1920 x 1080 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16/32GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 16MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Video 1080p

Connectivity 4G LTE
Dimensions 142mm x 72.5mm x 8.1mm
Weight 145g
Battery 2,800 mAh

VERDICT: Behind a cheap-looking build lies the beastliest smartphone around.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Samsung Galaxy S6 edge

Reviewed: June 2015, price: £760

www.samsung.com/uk

This is currently one of the best looking smartphones on the market. That dual-curved screen makes the iPhone 6 Plus and HTC One M9 look boring in comparison. An insanely fast camera and superb performance means that the Samsung Galaxy S6 edge isn't just about looks either.

OS Android 5.0 Lollipop
Processor octa-core Samsung Exynos 7420
Screen 5.1-inches
Resolution 1,440 x 2,560
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 64GB/128GB
Micro SD compatible? No
Rear camera 16MP
Front camera 5MP

Video 4K
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 142.11 x 70.1 x 7mm
Weight 132g
Battery 2,600 mAh

VERDICT: A phone that grabs attention with both its looks and performance.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Sony Xperia L

Reviewed: August 2013, price: £249

www.sonymobile.com

This device includes some higher end specs for a low cost handset as well as a snappy camera, a high quality screen and impressive battery life. However, the odd design choices are a distraction and the screen does suffer from lag issues. Lower cost devices like the Nokia 620 offer more at a cheaper price. Access to the Google Play store potentially gives it an edge over the 620, if that's what you're after.

Dimensions 128.7x 65 x 9.7mm, 137g
Display 4.3 inch, TFT capacitive touchscreen, 480x854 pixels, 228 ppi
OS Android 4.1
CPU Qualcomm MSM8230 Snapdragon dual core 1GHz
GPU Adreno 305

Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB, microSD up to 32GB
Wireless Wi-Fi 802.11 a/b/g/n
Camera 8MP, autofocus, LED flash
Battery Up to 9 hours (3G) - accurate

VERDICT: Not a bad choice for gamers on a budget, but for others there are better handsets.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





Sony Xperia SP

Reviewed: July 2013, price: £290
www.sonymobile.com

The Xperia SP has an excellent high definition screen, a fairly solid battery life and an interesting notification system involving a panel at the bottom of the phone which lights up with customisable colours when you get a message. However the phone's not as powerful as last year's flagships, is slightly bulky and there are rival phones to be had for less money, particularly if you're not fussed about 4G.

OS Android 4.1
Screen 4.6inch / 720x1280 pixels
Input Capacitive touchscreen
Camera 8MP, VGA front
Video Record / Playback
Audio Music player / Stereo Bluetooth / 3.5mm jack
Memory 8GB expandable via micro SD card
Battery 2370 mAh

VERDICT: If 4G LTE isn't for you, the Xperia SP isn't quite the bargain it first seems.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★★
USABILITY ★★★★★
DESIGN ★★★★★



Sony Xperia T3

Reviewed: July 2013, price: £290
www.sonymobile.com

If it weren't for the existence of the Sony Xperia T2 Ultra, released less than nine months prior, the T3 would be a solid recommendation. It's a highly satisfactory smartphone with a premium build - but without anybody who would really need to buy it.

OS Android 4.4 Kit Kat
Processor 1.4GHz quad-core
Screen 5.3 inches
Resolution 1,280 x 720 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 1.1MP front-facing
Video 720p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 150.7 x 77 x 7mm
Weight 148g
Battery 2,500 mAh

VERDICT: A solid effort makes it a viable mid-range phablet choice.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★★
USABILITY ★★★★★
DESIGN ★★★★★



Sony Xperia Z1

Reviewed: December 2013, price: £475
www.sonymobile.com

It's a little on the large side, but Sony's latest handset is rock solid, with powerful hardware and a unique design. Fans of the company will be right at home with the software that stores movies, music and games you've bought across other platforms. Add in a great camera and you've got a phone that stops just short of best in class.

OS Android 4.2 Jelly Bean
Processor Snapdragon 800 quad-core 2.2GHz
Screen 1080 x 1920 pixels, 5 inches
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB expandable up to 64GB via micro SD
Camera 20.7MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Wireless Wi-Fi, Bluetooth 4.0
Ports micro SD, microUSB
Battery 3000 mAh
Dimensions 144 x 74 x 8.5mm
Weight 170g

VERDICT: Software makes it great for Sony fans, hardware makes it good for the rest

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★★
USABILITY ★★★★★
DESIGN ★★★★★





WHAT MOBILE EDITOR'S CHOICE ★★★★★

Sony Xperia Z1 Compact

Reviewed: March 2014, price: £449
www.sonymobile.com

If you hate giant displays and don't have the patience for Apple's iOS and its restrictive App Store, the Sony Xperia Z1 Compact your only choice, and a great one at that. Sony have done well to make a phone with the power to rival the mighty iPhone in an equally small package. In-built Sony-branded apps such as Walkman and PlayStation is an inherent plus, too. Fingers crossed for a KitKat 4.4 upgrade soon.

OS Android 4.3
Processor Qualcomm Snapdragon 800
Screen 4.3-inch HD Triluminos
Resolution 720 x 1,280 pixels
Memory 2GB
Storage 16GB, expandable to 64GB

Camera 20.7MP Exmor RS
Video 720p
Connectivity Wi-Fi, 3G, 4G, Bluetooth 4.0, NFC
Dimensions 127 x 64.9 x 9.5mm
Weight 137g
Battery 2,300 mAh

VERDICT: The most powerful, best looking compact Android available. Simple.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★★
USABILITY ★★★★★
DESIGN ★★★★★



Sony Xperia Z2

Reviewed: July 2014, price: £579
www.sonymobile.com

The Z2 matches its rivals' power and usability. A lack of design innovation and similar specs might deter Z1 owners from upgrading, though, and the large size might not appeal to fans of smaller devices. That said, superior imaging and a powerful processor and CPU means it excels in the right places.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 2.3GHz quad-core
Screen 5.2 inches
Resolution 1080 x 1920 pixels
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 16GB
MicroSD Compatible? Yes
Camera 20.7MP rear-facing, 2.2MP front-facing
Video 720p

Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 146.8 x 73.3 x 8.2mm
Weight 163g
Battery 3,200 mAh

VERDICT: An immaculate smartphone, if only a small step up from its predecessor.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★★
USABILITY ★★★★★
DESIGN ★★★★★



WHAT MOBILE EDITOR'S CHOICE ★★★★★

Sony Xperia Z3

Reviewed: December 2014, price: £549
www.sonymobile.com

We were all a little bit surprised when Sony elected to release a new flagship a matter of months after the Xperia Z2 hit shelves. After reviewing it though, the company's reasoning is obvious. The Z3 is a true flagship as worthy of your attention (and cash) as any other in this Buyer's Guide. The Z3 has premium design, hugely powerful internals and an array of neat features. A very impressive device.

OS Android 4.4 Kit Kat
Processor 2.5GHz quad-core
Screen 5.2 inches
Resolution 1,920 x 1,080 pixels
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 16GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes, up to 128GB
Camera 20.7MP rear-facing, 2.2MP front-facing

Video 4K
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 146 x 72 x 7.3mm
Weight 152g
Battery 3,100 mAh

VERDICT: Sony's best full-sized offering yet, although the camera is aging a little now.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★★
USABILITY ★★★★★
DESIGN ★★★★★





Sony Xperia Z3 Compact

Reviewed: December 14, price: £429
www.sonymobile.com

The Xperia Z3 Compact is indisputably the most powerful compact Android ever made. We can't really slight it for anything, and no other Android phone in its size bracket can come close to matching it. It's remarkable that Sony has managed to squeeze almost the exact same technology from the Z3 into a smaller body. Finally, Android power-users have a valid option in the sub-five inch display category.

OS Android 4.4 Kit Kat	Video 4K
Processor 2.5GHz quad-core	Connectivity 4G
Screen 4.6 inches	Dimensions 127 x 64.9 x 8.6mm
Resolution 1,280 x 720 pixels	Weight 129g
Memory 2GB RAM	Battery 2,600 mAh
Storage 16GB	
Micro SD compatible? Yes, up to 128GB	
Camera 20.7MP rear-facing, 2.2MP front-facing	

VERDICT: The definitive small-sized Android smartphone. The most powerful yet.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★★
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★★★



Vodafone Smart 4 Max

Reviewed: July 2015, price: £129.99
www.vodafone.co.uk

If you crave a 6-inch 4G phablet for the equivalent of £2.50 a week over a year the Smart 4 Max is the only game in town. Purists will sneer at its elderly processor, low-res screen and lack of "Lollipop". You'll be the one with around £400 more in your bank account. Just bear in mind it can only connect to Vodafone 4G network and you can't remove the Vodafone embedded software.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat	Weight 170g
Processor Snapdragon MSM8926	Battery 3,800 mAh
Screen 6-inches	
Memory 1GB RAM	
Storage 8GB	
Camera 13MP	
Video Yes	
Connectivity 4G	
Dimensions 164 x 83.4 x 7.9mm	

VERDICT: A great prices makes this worthwhile for first-time buyers.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★★
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★★★



Vodafone Smart 4 Power

Reviewed: February 2015, price: £79
www.vodafone.co.uk

The benchmark scores of a £79 phone were never going to impress anyone; the Smart 4 Power is not a handset for playing the latest taxing games on. That said, it's enough to deliver on the advantages of 4G. If instant information rather than instant gratification is what you're after, this phone delivers for the price.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat	Connectivity 4G
Processor 1.3GHz quad-core	Dimensions 141 x 71.4 x 9.5mm
Screen 5 inches	Weight 162g
Resolution 720 x 1280	Battery 3,000 mAh
Memory 1GB RAM	
Storage 4GB	
Micro SD compatible? Yes	
Camera 5MP rear-facing, VGA front-facing	
Video 720p	

VERDICT: Poor specs distract from what is an ergonomic and capable 4G starter.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★★
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★★★





Vodafone Smart Ultra 6

Reviewed: September 2015, price: £125
www.vodafone.co.uk

Packing a fast processor, excellent screen and plenty of battery life, you'll be hard-pressed to find a rival phone which offers quite this much for the money. Even the camera is pretty good, offering full manual controls and a high megapixel count. If you're after a true bargain Android device and are happy to forgo the big brands, this is well worth a look.

OS Android 5.0 Lollipop
Processor 1.5GHz quad-core
Screen 5.5 inches
Resolution 1920 x 1080
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 5MP front-facing
Video 1080p 30fps

Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 154 x 77 x 8.4mm
Weight 159g
Battery 3,000 mAh

VERDICT: Excellent specs and great battery life make this seriously good value.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Yezz Andy A5

Reviewed: June 2014, price: £207
www.sayyezz.com

Camera phone fans on a tight budget should definitely seek out the Andy A5 for its affordable price and high-quality camera. If taking photos is not that important to you then you'll probably have seen the uninspired design and bland features a million times before.

OS Android 4.2 (Jelly Bean)
Processor Quad-core 1.2GHz
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 540 x 960 pixels
Memory 512MB RAM
Camera 13MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Connectivity 3G, wi-fi
Dimensions 144.1 x 73.5 x 8.6mm

Weight 106g
Battery 2,000 mAh

VERDICT: A great camera, but the rest struggles against more bullish counterparts.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



YotaPhone 2

Reviewed: June 2014, price: £549
www.yotaphone.com/gb-en/

The YotaPhone 2 fixes almost all of the original's flaws, and turns the rear E Ink display from an impractical cherry on top, to one of the phone's main ingredients. There's no denying this quirky conversation-starter is for a niche audience, and a rich one at that. We can't wait to see what the YotaPhone 3 will bring - not least a price drop for this model.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor Quad-core 2.3GHz Krait 400
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 1,080 x 1,920 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 32GB
MicroSD compatible? No
Camera 8MP rear-facing,

2.1MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 144 x 69.5 x 8.9mm
Weight 145g
Battery 2,500 mAh

VERDICT: If you're constantly reading on the go this is the best new smartphone in years.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





ZTE Blade Vec 4G

Reviewed: February 2015, price: £153
www.ztedevices.co.uk

Once you've fixed all the software customisations present on the Vec 4G, you're left with a pretty respectable performer for the price. The large, sharp display does a great job of quickly rendering web pages over 4G. Unfortunately, the Vec 4G battery's small capacity and demanding hardware mean you'll often find the phone emptied by the end of the day. It also has storage issues - namely no SD card slot.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 1.2GHz quad-core
Screen 5 inches
Resolution 720 x 1280
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 16GB
Micro SD compatible? No
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 1MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 142.3 x 70.4 x 7.8mm
Weight 155g
Battery 2,300 mAh

VERDICT: Solid specs for 4G at a reasonable price, but there are better options out there.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



ZTE Blade V

Reviewed: February 2014, price: £99.99
www.ztedevices.co.uk

A fantastic price makes the ZTE Blade V easy to recommend for first-time buyers. Anyone hoping to get the most out of a smartphone's apps and snaps should look elsewhere, but if you don't want to worry about a phone for the kids being broken or stolen, then this is your guy.

OS Android 4.1 Jelly Bean
Processor Snapdragon S4 Play
Screen 480 x 800, 4 inches
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 4GB
Camera 5MP
Video Yes
Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 126 x 64 x 10.9mm
Weight 130g
Battery 1,800 mAh

VERDICT: A great prices makes this worthwhile for first-time buyers.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



ZTE Blade S6

Reviewed: August 2015 price: £169.99
www.ztedevices.co.uk

The ZTE Blade S6 is definitely more than just a cheap iPhone 6 rip off. A decent camera helps it stand out from the rest of the mid-range crowd, whilst performance is surprisingly decent for a phone of this price. It's let down by poor build quality and software that lacks certain features. The price is the most attractive, however, and those negatives shouldn't put you off this decent mid-range phone.

OS Android 5.0 Lollipop
Processor Snapdragon 615
Screen 5-inches
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB
Camera 13MP
Video Yes
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 144 x 70.7 x 7.7mm
Weight 154g
Battery 2,400 mAh

VERDICT: An affordable phone with surprisingly decent performance.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





Amazon Kindle Fire HD 8.9"

Reviewed: May 2013, price: £229/259
www.amazon.co.uk

A good looking e-reader with tablet capabilities, limited by Amazon's annoying operating system and app eco-system, and an annoyingly slow browser. This device will doubtless be a commercial success, with its branding and ease of use, but for the more serious user there are much better tablets out there.

Dimensions 240 x 164 x 8.8mm	RAM 1GB RAM
OS Customized Android 4.0	Storage 16GB/32GB
Screen 8.9 inch IPS LCD capacitive touchscreen	Cameras front facing 1.3MP with 720p video
Resolution 1920 x 1200, 254 ppi	Wireless 802.11 a/b/g/n, dual-band
Processor TI OMAP 4470 dual-core 1.5 GHz Cortex-A9	Ports USB 2.0, 3.5mm audio jacks, Bluetooth A2DP
GPU PowerVR SGX544	Battery life 10 hours (accurate)

VERDICT: A solid, functional tablet which is limited by its Amazon associations.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★★
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★★★



Acer Iconia Tab 8

Reviewed: April 2015, price: £140
www.amazon.co.uk

Acer has managed to do what manufacturers of every cheap tablet should aspire to: create a tablet that is priced extremely competitively, but which performs to a standard much higher than you'd expect for its cost. A few compromises have been made along the way, but this is still a budget slab that's well worth considering.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat	2MP front-facing
Processor 1.3GHz quad-core	Video 720p
Screen 8 inches	Connectivity Wi-fi only
Resolution 1,280 x 800 pixels	Dimensions 215 x 130 x 8.5mm
Memory 2GB RAM	Weight 360g
Storage 16GB/32GB	Battery 4,600 mAh
Micro SD compatible? Yes, up to 32GB	
Camera 5MP rear-facing,	

VERDICT: It has a few flaws, but for less than £150 you should look past them.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★★
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★★★



Advent Vega Tegra Note 7

Reviewed: April 2014, price: £140
www.nvidia.co.uk

It's a contender, alright. Aside from some clunky desing issues, the Advent Vega Tegra Note 7 is a powerful and punchy little machine. If you're after a compact and affordable tablet its speed sets it aside from its rivals as a device that's great for gaming, customising images and browsing the web.

OS Android Jelly Bean 4.3	Weight 320g
Processor Nvidia Tegra 4	Battery 8 hours
Screen 7 inches	
Resolution 1,280 x 800 pixels	
Memory 1GB RAM	
Storage 16GB	
Connectivity Wi-fi, Bluetooth 4.0	
Dimensions 119 x 199 x 9.6mm	

VERDICT: Its speed sets it apart from its competition. A cheap and capable device.

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES	★★★★★
USABILITY	★★★★★
DESIGN	★★★★★





Amazon Kindle Fire HDX

Reviewed: January 2014, price: £199-329
www.amazon.co.uk/kindle

The Kindle Fire HDX is around £100 more than the Fire but the improved screen and processor justifies the extra cost. The real human Help feature will be a boon to tablet newbies; experienced users will regard it as a gimmick. The HDX is a top-rate device – but if you're not a regular Amazon customer you're better off with a Nexus.

OS Amazon customised Android OS, v4.1.2
PROCESSOR Snapdragon 800 2.2GHz quad-core
SCREEN 1902 x 1200 pixels, 7 inches
MEMORY 2GB RAM
STORAGE 16GB, 32GB, 64GB versions available
CAMERA 8MP front-facing
VIDEO 720HD
WIRELESS Wi-fi (optional Vodafone 4G version)
PORTS microUSB
DIMENSIONS 131.8 x 66.9 x 9.9mm
WEIGHT 302g

VERDICT: A significant update to the Fire and ideal for Amazon users.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Apple iPad Mini

Reviewed: December 2012, price: £269
www.apple.com/uk

The iPad Mini represents Apple playing it safe, which is to say: disappointing. This is little more than an iPad 2, with all its limitations - a low res screen and weak processor power - shrunk down to an odd 7.9-inch size. It is also overpriced, the Google Nexus 7 offers superior performance for £100 less. Despite its luxurious design, you really are paying for little more than 4G support, and Apple's App Store. Average.

OS iOS 6.0.1
Screen 7.9-inch LED-backlit IPS LCD
Resolution 768 x 1024 pixels at 162 pixels per inch
Input Capacitive touchscreen
CPU Apple A5 1GHz dual core
GPU PowerVR SGX543MP2
Memory 512MB
Storage 16/32/64GB
Camera 5MP rear facing, 1.2MP front facing
Video 1920x1080 (1080P HD) at 30fps. Video stabilised
Wireless Wi-Fi 802.11 a/b/g/n, dual-band, Bluetooth 4.0
Ports 3.5mm audio jack, Apple Lightning port (USB 2.0)
Size 200 x 134.7 x 7.2mm
Weight 308g

VERDICT: Little more than a shrunken iPad 2 with 4G. Disappointing.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Apple iPad 3

Reviewed: April 2012, price: £399
www.apple.com/uk

The new iPad boasts the highest-resolution display of any tablet, as well as an improved 5MP camera and better connectivity. Not to mention a high-powered new processor which makes it the most powerful iPad ever, too. Though some may resist the upgrade path, the unrivalled Retina display is a subtle but deeply appealing feature which will become more and more desirable. The new iPad is by far the best tablet around

OS iOS 5
Screen 9.7-inch TFT
Resolution 1536 x 2048 pixels
Input Capacitive touchscreen
Processor 1GHz Cortex-A9
Memory 1GB
Storage 16/32/64GB
Camera 5MP rear-facing, 0.3MP front-facing
Flash No
Video 1080p HD
Wireless 802.11a/b/g/n Wi-Fi, Bluetooth 4.0
Ports 3.5mm audio jack, proprietary Apple connector
Standby time 720 hours
Use time 9 hours
Size 241 x 186 x 9mm
Weight 662g

VERDICT: There's simply no contest - the new iPad is the best tablet in the world.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





Apple iPad 4

Reviewed: January 2013, price: £399
www.apple.com/uk

A rather cheeky move by Apple to release the iPad 4 (or 'iPad with Retina Display') just months after the iPad 3. All it really adds is a new processor (the iPhone 5's A6X) and Apple's new lightning connector. However, this means it remains as the best tablet money can buy - and Apple's App Store and its 300,000 dedicated tablet apps only make the proposition more enticing.

OS iOS 6.0.1, **Screen** 9.7 inch LED
Resolution 1536 x 2048 pixels at 264 ppi pixel density
CPU Apple A6X, Dual-core
GPU PowerVR SGX554MP4,
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 16/32/64GB storage
Camera 5MP rear facing, 1.2MP front facing
Video 1080P HD at 30fps
Wireless Wi-Fi 802.11 a/b/g/n, Bluetooth 4.0
Cellular 4G, 3G, 2G
Ports Lightning Connector (USB2.0) and 3.5mm audio jack,
Dimensions 241.2 x 185.7 x 9.4mm
Weight 662 g

VERDICT: The best tablet money can buy.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Archos 79 Platinum

Reviewed: April 2014, price: £150
www.archos.com

With so many budget tablets to choose from the Archos 79 Platinum has no features or unique selling points to attract the consumer in a saturated market. Its hardware is woefully underpowered, its features are bog standard and it is at least £10 too expensive. Its attractive looks are not enough to redeem it. The bottom line is that it should have never been conceived.

OS Android 4.2 Jelly Bean **Weight** 366g
Processor Quad-core A9 **Battery** Lithium Polymer 1.6GHz
Screen 7.85 inches
Resolution 1024 x 768 pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB
Camera 2MP rear-facing
Connectivity Wi-fi, Bluetooth
Dimensions 201 x 137 x 8mm

VERDICT: There is no reason you ever would, or should, buy it. Avoid, avoid, avoid.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Archos 101 XS 2

Reviewed: February 2014, price: £250
www.archos.com

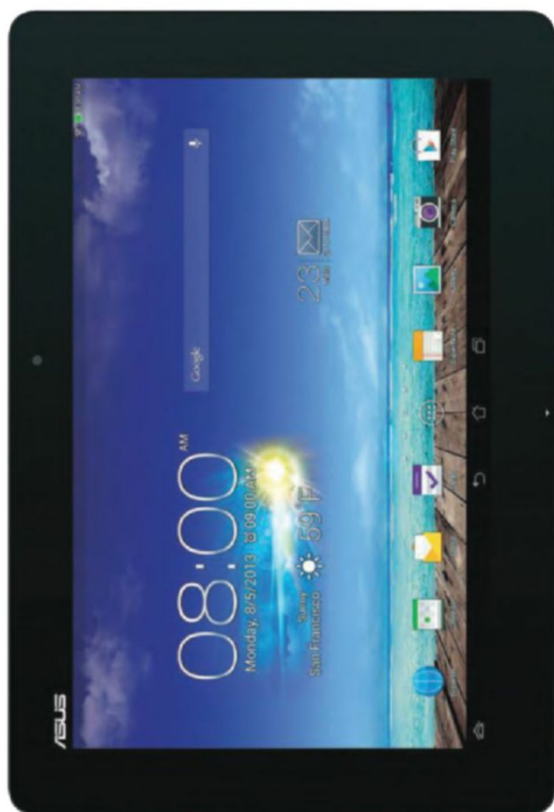
A couple of years ago, the 101 XS would have had us singing Archos' praises, but by today's standards its processing power and screen quality fall short. It might, though, find a home with users limited to spending £250 on a 10-inch tablet

OS Android 4.2.2 **Weight** 366g
SCREEN 10.1-inch/1,280 x 800 pixels
CAMERA 2MP rear, 2MP front
VIDEO Record/playback
AUDIO Music player/3.5mm jack
MEMORY 16GB expandable via microSD
DIMENSIONS 273 x 169 x 10.1mm (tablet), 273 x 169 x 5mm (keyboard)
WEIGHT 636g (tablet), 200g (keyboard)

VERDICT: A great price is let down by a poor screen and cheap build.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





Asus Transformer Pad TF701T

Reviewed: February 2014, price: £429

www.asus.com

The Asus Transformer Pad TF701T packs a beautiful screen and the keyboard dock is well thought out. But dated software and the threat of a Google Nexus 10 sequel make this a niche device. Do you really need a keyboard? The iPad mini begs to differ.

OS Android 4.3 (via an over-the-air update)

SCREEN 10.1 inch/2,560 x 1,600 pixels

INPUT Capacitive touchscreen

CAMERA 5MP rear, 1.2MP front

VIDEO Record/playback

AUDIO Music player/3.5mm jack

MEMORY 32/64GB

BATTERY Tablet 31Wh, dock 16Wh



Google Nexus 9

Reviewed: February 2015, price: £319

www.google.co.uk/nexus

The Google Nexus 9 is an impressive and welcome return to the tablet market for HTC, and a jewel of a gadget for Android 5.0 to debut on. The size is right, and if you know for sure you want an Android tablet, it's your best bet - it's certainly the best slate HTC has ever made - but for the money we'd still go for the quality build and thriving eco-system of an iPad.

OS Android 5.0 Lollipop

Screen 8.9-inch

Resolution 2048 x 1536 pixels

Processor Tegra K1 2.3GHz

Memory 2GB RAM

Storage 16GB/32GB internal

Camera 8MP rear-facing, 1.6MP front-facing

Flash No

Video 1080p HD

Dimensions 153.68mm x 228.25mm x 7.95mm

Weight 425g

Battery 6,700 mAh



Google Nexus 10

Reviewed: February 2013, price: £319

www.google.co.uk/nexus

Finally, the Android tablet everyone's been waiting for - except Apple. This is a tablet that can go head to head with the best in the Apple iPad stable - it has a powerful processor, a Retina Display quality screen, the latest version of Android. Along with the Nexus 7, this is the best tablet Android users can buy. The only flaws are an uninspired body, and a dearth of tablet specific apps.

OS Android 4.2 (Jelly Bean)

Dimensions 263.9 x 177.6 x 8.9mm, 603g

Screen 10 inch

Resolution 2560 x 1600 pixels

Input Super PLS TFT

capacitive touch-screen

CPU Exynos 5, Dual-core ARM

Cortex-A15

RAM 2GB

Cameras 5MP (main), 1.9MP (front)

Wireless Wi-Fi, Bluetooth

NFC Android Beam

Storage 16GB/32GB

Connectivity Micro

USB, Micro HDMI, 3.5mm

headphone jack

Battery 9,000 mAh

VERDICT: It packs fast hardware but can't compete with the iPad Air or Nexus range

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



VERDICT: The best tablet on the market - if you insist on Android, that is.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



VERDICT: The best Android tablet of 2013 slips behind the iPad only due to apps.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





HP Slate 7

Reviewed: October 2013, price: £125
www.hp.com

The steel frame makes the Slate 7 an impressive sight and its audio uses Beats technology to great effect. The fantastic price will help it to undercut some of its rivals, though the slow processor and low quality camera keep it from besting them elsewhere.

OS Android 4.1 Jelly Bean
Processor Dual-core 1.6 GHz Cortex-A9
Screen 600 x 1024 pixels, 7.0 inches
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB expandable to 32GB via SD card
Camera 3.15MP pixel rear facing, VGA front facing

Video 720p
Dimensions 197.1 x 116.1 x 10.7mm
Weight 372 g
Battery non-removable, 5h media time

VERDICT: Great audio and build, but corners have been cut to keep costs down.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★★
USABILITY ★★★★★
DESIGN ★★★★★



Lenovo ThinkPad 8

Reviewed: September 2014, price: £424
www.lenovo.com

If you just want a device for general tasks then you can find better alternatives within Lenovo's Yoga range of Android slates, and elsewhere. If you're a fan of Windows and in search of a bulkier device that offers plenty of productivity tools, then the ThinkPad is an (almost) viable option.

OS Windows 8.1
Processor 2.4GHz quad-core
Screen 8.3 inches
Resolution 1200 x 1920 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 32GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 2.2MP front-facing

Video 1080p
Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 8.83 x 5.2 x 0.35 inches
Weight 439g

VERDICT: Even with so few Windows tablets available the ThinkPad still fails to stand out.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★★
USABILITY ★★★★★
DESIGN ★★★★★



Lenovo Miix 2

Reviewed: July 2014, price: £255
www.microsoft.com/surface

With solid performance across the board, frequently usable built-in apps and compact size the Miix 2 is a small but surprisingly versatile slate. Despite the limitations that come with the Windows OS, it performs general tasks well and, for the price, won't let you down. With 3G capability you can even connect to the internet on the move. Overall, it offers plenty of pleasant surprises to combat the weaknesses of its OS.

OS Windows 8.1
Processor 1.3GHz quad-core
Screen 8 inches
Resolution 1280 x 800 pixels
Memory 2GB
Storage 32GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes
Camera 5MP rear-facing, 2MP front-facing
Video 1080p

Connectivity 3G
Dimensions 8.3 x 215.6 x 131mm
Weight 350g
Battery 4,730 mAh

VERDICT: A small but substantial Windows offering that still trails its Android rivals.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★★
USABILITY ★★★★★
DESIGN ★★★★★





Lenovo Yoga Tablet 2

Reviewed: March 2015, price: £249
www.lenovo.com

Lenovo certainly deserves credit for trying to break the 'black slab' mould. It's an interesting attempt at something different, but unless you have a real need to hang it up from the ceiling or to perch it upright on a train table every day its mediocre internals and display don't represent that much value for money.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 1.86GHz quad-core
Screen 10.1inches
Resolution 1920 x 1200 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes, up to 64GB
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 1.6MP front-facing
Video 720p
Connectivity 4G optional
Dimensions 255 x 183 x 7.2mm
Weight 619g
Battery 9,600 mAh

VERDICT: A nice idea, but one we don't fully buy into. Not quite up to scratch.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Microsoft Surface 2 Pro

Reviewed: February 2014, price: £720
www.microsoft.com/surface

We can't fault Microsoft's ambition for the powerful Surface Pro 2 to become your all-in-one portable work and play device. It's got a great display and solid hardware but a lack of dedicated apps, software compromises and stiff - cheaper - competition make it a tough sell.

OS Windows 8.1
Screen 10.6 inches/1920 x 1080 pixels
Input Capacitive touchscreen
Camera 720p resolution front and rear
Video Record/playback
Audio Music player/3.5mm jack
Memory 64GB/128GB/
 256GB/512GB
Battery 48Wh

VERDICT: Price holds back what is an otherwise excellent work/play hybrid.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Microsoft Surface Pro 3

Reviewed: November 2014, price: £640
www.microsoft.com/surface

From software to hardware and even design, the Surface Pro 3 is a wonderful piece of kit. It's refreshing to come across a tablet with grander ideals than the norm, challenging us to rethink the notion of the medium. For most people this could genuinely replace their laptop. It's just a shame, and an almost inexcusable mistake, that the keyboard which is so integral to its function is sold as an expensive extra.

OS Windows 8.1
Processor 1.5GHz Intel core i3/2.9GHz Intel core i5/3.7GHz Intel core i7
Screen 12 inches
Resolution 2160 x 1440 pixels
Memory 4GB/8GB RAM
Storage 64GB/128GB/256GB/512GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes, up to 128GB
Camera 5MP rear-facing, 5MP front-facing
Video 1080p
Connectivity Wi-fi only
Dimensions 292.1mm x 201.4mm x 9.1mm
Weight 800g
Battery 42Wh

VERDICT: The first tablet with enough function to conceivably replace a laptop.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





Nokia Lumia 2520

Reviewed: February 2014, price: £399
www.nokia.com

The Windows-run Lumia 2520 is a decent first effort from Nokia - and it's certainly one of the more attractive and solid pieces of tablet hardware on the market. It has a few issues with the weight and a lackluster camera but overall we have no trouble recommending this to Windows 8.1 and Lumia fans.

OS Windows 8.1
Screen 10.1 inches, 1920 x 1080 pixels, 218PPI
Processor Qualcomm Snapdragon 800
Memory 2GB
Camera 6.7MP with Carl Zeiss lens
Audio Music player/3.5mm jack

Dimensions 168 x 267 x 8.9mm, 615g
Battery 8120 mAh

VERDICT: A rock-solid first effort from Nokia in this market with powerful specs.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★★
USABILITY ★★★★★
DESIGN ★★★★★



Samsung Galaxy Tab 3 Kids

Reviewed: February 2014, price: £250
www.nokia.com

The Tab 3 Kids is surprisingly robust, with a solid camera, great battery, fantastic educational apps and software to suit kids. But the premium design doesn't feel like it was meant to be enjoyed by young users and we'd suggest going with a company that specialises in the market rather than one that's testing it out.

OS Android 4.1
Processor Dual-core 1.2GHz
Screen 600 x 1024 pixels, 7 inches
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB/16GB, expandable up to 64GB
Camera 3.15MP (back), 1.3MP (front)
Video 720p@30fps

Wireless WiFi, Bluetooth 3.0
Ports micro-USB, microSD
Dimensions 188 x 111.1 x 9.9mm
Weight 306g
Battery Li-Ion 4,000 mAh

VERDICT: A little too premium for the market it's aimed at.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★★
USABILITY ★★★★★
DESIGN ★★★★★



Samsung Galaxy Tab S

Reviewed: October 2014, price: £319
www.samsung.com/uk

While the Tab S may not be a radical departure from other Android tablets, it encompasses everything that is great about a top-notch Samsung product. It's enough to rebuild the Korean giant's brand image, and proof that the company can still surprise us with a fantastic all-round product.

OS Android 4.4 Kit Kat
Processor 2.3GHz quad-core
Screen 8.4 inches
Resolution 2560 x 1600 pixels
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 16GB, 32GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes
Camera 8MP rear-facing, 2.1MP front-facing
Video 1080p

Connectivity 4G
Dimensions 125.6 x 212.8 x 6.6mm
Weight 294g
Battery 4,900 mAh

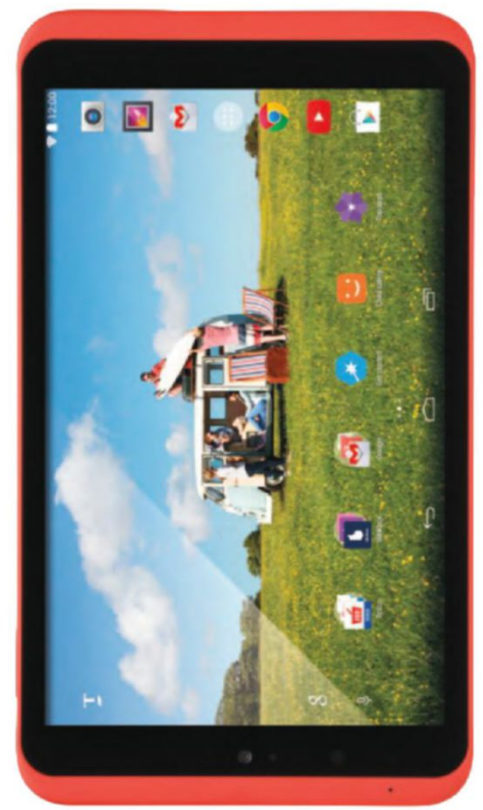
VERDICT: Simply put, it's the best Android tablet on the market.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★★
USABILITY ★★★★★
DESIGN ★★★★★





WHAT MOBILE EDITOR'S CHOICE
★★★★★



Samsung Galaxy Note Pro 12.2

Reviewed: May 2014, price: £649
www.samsung.com/uk

One of the biggest displays ever seen on a tablet - at no detriment to quality. Combine that with solid design and a super powerful processor to run loads of unique applications and the NotePRO 12.2 is arguably the best tablet on the market. It's certainly the best Android slate, although it's definitely priced as such.

Sony Xperia Z2 Tablet

Reviewed: June 2014, price: £399
www.sony.co.uk

If looks could kill, Sony murdered the competition. Add to that a powerful processor and decent screen size and you have a great new addition to the high-end tablet market. Innovative features like dust and water resistance are impressive too, and manage to make up the expensive price tag.

Tesco Hudl 2

Reviewed: January 2015, price: £129
www.tesco.com/direct/hudl

This is no Tesco Value attempt at a tablet. Make no mistake, the Hudl 2 is a fantastic Android slate that's great value for money. Sure, it's not on the cutting edge like Google's Nexus series of devices, but if all you want is a gadget to casually surf the web, watch some films or read a few comics, this device is every bit as capable as an iPad Mini.

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor Octa-core (1.9GHz + 1.3GHz quad)
Screen 12.2 inches
Resolution 2560 x 1600 pixels
Memory 3GB RAM
Storage 32GB/64GB
Camera 8MP rear/2MP front-facing
Video 1,080p Full HD
Connectivity Wi-fi only
Dimensions 295.6 x 204 x 7.95mm
Weight 750g
Battery 9,500 mAh

OS Android OS v4.4.2 (KitKat) 4G LTE
Screen 10.1 inches
Processor Quad-core 2.3 GHz
Memory 3GB
Storage 16GB, microSD up to 64GB
Camera 8.1MP rear, 2.2MP front
Battery 6,000 mAh
Network Wi-fi connectivity,

OS Android 4.4 KitKat
Processor 1.83GHz quad-core
Screen 8.3 inches
Resolution 1,920 x 1,200 pixels
Memory 2GB RAM
Storage 16GB
MicroSD compatible? Yes
Camera 5MP rear-facing, 1.2MP front-facing
Video 720p at 30fps
Connectivity Wi-fi
Dimensions 224 x 128 x 9mm
Weight 410g
Battery 4,900 mAh

VERDICT: Big, beautiful, functional and priced to match. Android's finest.

VERDICT: A good all-round tablet, with looks that set it apart from the rest of the flagships.

VERDICT: Don't be fooled - Tesco is now a serious contender in the tablet space.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★★
USABILITY ★★★★★
DESIGN ★★★★★

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★★
USABILITY ★★★★★
DESIGN ★★★★★

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★★
USABILITY ★★★★★
DESIGN ★★★★★





Toshiba Excite Pure

Reviewed: February 2014, price: £250
www.toshiba.co.uk

The Toshiba Excite Pure's £250 price is attractive but its display is far too faded. It means apps and the like don't look very good. It might appeal to families looking for a cheap way to keep the kids entertained but little else. Even so, the slow processor and useless apps force us to recommend you look elsewhere.

OS Android v4.2 (Jelly Bean)
Processor Nvidia Tegra 3
Memory 1GB
Storage 16GB
Screen 1280 x 800 pixels, 10.1 inches
Video HD
Audio Stereo
Dimensions 261.6 x 177.8 x 10.2mm

VERDICT: It's got a cheap price tag but the poor display and tech shows why.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Vodafone Smart Tab 4G

Reviewed: June 2015, price: £125
www.vodafone.co.uk

Attractive, cheap and feature-packed; the Vodafone Smart Tab 4G looks more upmarket than its affordable £125 pricing suggests. It's let down by a slow processor, but that shouldn't put you off what is basically well-designed and ideal family tablet.

OS Android KitKat 4.4
Processor 1.2 GHz Quad-Core
Screen 8.0-inches
Resolution 1280 x 800-pixels
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 8GB
Micro SD compatible? Yes, up to 64GB
Rear camera 5MP
Front camera 2MP
Connectivity GSM/EDGE/3G/4G/HSPA+/LTE
Dimensions 209 x 128 x 7.99mm
Weight 309g
Battery 4060 mAh

VERDICT: An affordable and easy-to-use tablet that offers something for everyone.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★



Vodafone Smart Tab 6

Reviewed: September 2015, price: £150
www.vodafone.co.uk

The Smart Tab 6 is definitely cheap but we'd suggest looking elsewhere for a good budget tablet. The screen isn't that great and performance can't quite keep up with more intensive tasks and games. It has a large battery and the build quality is definitely better than the price suggests, but these points aren't enough to redeem what is an average tablet at best.

OS Android 5.0.2 Lollipop
Processor Quad-core 1.3GHz
Screen 1280 x 800 pixels, 9.6 inches
Memory 1GB RAM
Storage 16GB, expandable up to 32GB
Camera 5MP rear camera, 2MP front camera
Video 720p
Wireless WiFi, Bluetooth 4.1
Ports micro-USB, microSD
Dimensions 146 x 244 x 7.9mm
Weight 406g
Battery Li-Ion 4,600 mAh

VERDICT: Cheap but not quite good enough to worry the competition.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★
 USABILITY ★★★★★
 DESIGN ★★★★★





Asus ZenWatch

Reviewed: April 2015, price: £204
www.asus.com/uk/

The Asus ZenWatch is handsome enough, but fails to stand out from the crowd of Android Wear devices. Google's wearable OS still feels like a solution in search of a problem - unless you have a specific use in mind for its features you may want to hold out for the next generation of devices.

VERDICT: Attractive, but with too many caveats to recommend outright.



Fitbit Flex

Reviewed: August 2014, price: £79.99
www.fitbit.com

Minor niggles aside, the Fitbit Flex is possibly the best fitness wearable on the market. Its features are so diverse, and its app so beautiful and intuitive, that it can be tailored to just about anyone's lifestyle. With interchangeable bands in a variety of colours, and a low price, the Flex is practically a must-buy.

VERDICT: A fantastic companion app and great functionality put the Flex on top.



LG G Watch R

Reviewed: May 2015, price: £180.00
www.jawbone.com

The LG G Watch R may be one of the most mature-looking smartwatches yet, but not everyone will find it attractive - or appreciate Android Wear's limitations. The market's set to explode with the advent of the Apple Watch and the Pebble Time. Unless you're desperate for what the LG G Watch R does right now, it's hard to see the value in yet another second-generation Android Wear watch.

VERDICT: Although attractive, it has limited functionality compared to other smartwatches.



Nike+ Fuelband SE

Reviewed: June 2014, price: £89
www.nike.com

The Nike+ FuelBand SE is close to being the perfect sports tracker. It's social capabilities combined with its numerous features to keep you motivated ensure that it will be a permanent mainstay in any gym addicts kit bag. You might not be so keen on wearing it every single day, though, with its appealing design being more clearly tailored to a casual setting. Plus, its lack of waterproofing could be a deal-breaker for some.

VERDICT: When it comes to fitness, Nike is a name you can trust - this is no exception.



Samsung Galaxy Gear 2

Reviewed: June 2014, price: £250
www.samsung.com

The design needs a rethink but the Samsung Galaxy Gear 2 provides decent fitness tracking features and a good music player. Trimming down on other functions, however, would have made for a slimmer and sleeker product. It would be unfair to say this is a needless addition as it packs a lot of functions, but it's an expensive product that's hindered by an impractical design and redundant features.

VERDICT: A decent effort that has since been eclipsed by superior Android Wear devices.



Sony Smartband SWR10

Reviewed: September 2014, price: £80
www.sony.com

A mishmash of features means that the SWR10 occupies an odd space in the wearable tech world. But at least it is a space all of its own. No similar device can offer you all of the features of the SWR10, though that's irrelevant if those features don't suit your needs. On the plus side, a large number of the SWR10's drawbacks are with its partner app, and apps can always be improved.

VERDICT: Potential to be a serious contender, but a hard sell for most in its current state.



Wearable compatibility guide



LG
G Watch R



Pebble
Watch



Samsung
Gear Live



Sony
Smartwatch 3



Garmin
Vivofit



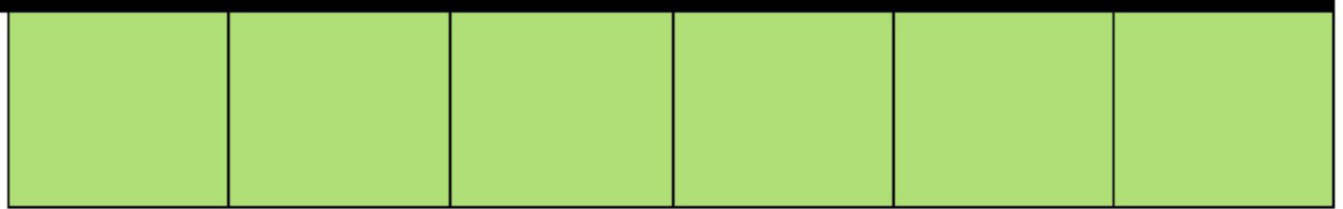
Archos
Activity Tracker



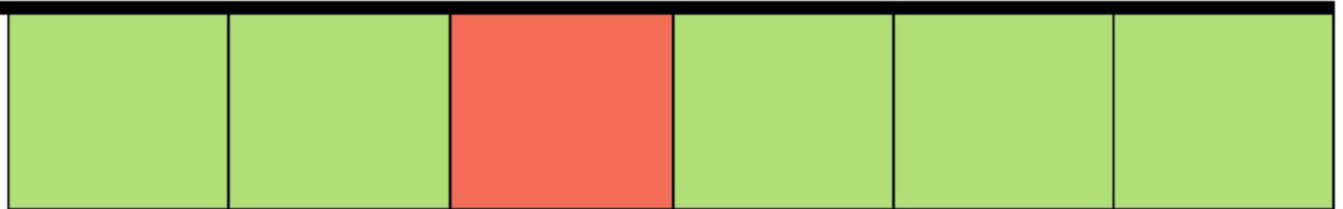
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