

HTC Vive review

Is the room-scale HTC Vive worth the £599 price tag? We've spent some time with the HTC Vive, and here's what we thought.

By Lewis Painter | 21 Aug 2017

Specifications

- High resolution 2160x1200 display
- 90Hz
- More than 70 sensors, tracks movement to 1/10 degree
- Bluetooth connectivity for notifications
- Front-facing camera

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Expert's Rating

★★★★★

TECH ADVISOR
RECOMMENDED

Price when reviewed

\$599

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Retailer	Price	Delivery	
HTC	£599.00		View

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HTC Vive review

The HTC Vive is the most expensive option in the current virtual reality headset line-up, beating the £499 Oculus Rift and £350 PlayStation VR. But why the high price? The HTC Vive offers an unparalleled experience by providing users with the opportunity to not only look around the virtual environment but physically walk around and interact with the environment using bespoke handheld controllers.

With the Oculus Rift and HTC Vive now on sale, the question has to be asked – is the HTC Vive worth the £599 price tag? We've spent some time with the HTC Vive, and here's what we thought. Read next: The complete guide to virtual reality: VR headsets, VR games, apps and more

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UK pricing and availability

So, how much does the HTC Vive cost – and more importantly – where and when can users buy one? The HTC Vive headset complete with two bespoke controllers and two base stations will set the average consumer back £599 plus P&P for us in the UK following an August 2017 price drop, making it a pretty competitive option.

HTC has acknowledged that even at £599, the headset is fairly expensive for the majority of consumers and also offers the HTC Vive on finance. Those interested in financing a HTC Vive can head to the Vive website to find out more.

In comparison, Oculus offers both the Oculus Rift and new Oculus Touch controllers for £599.

To sweeten the deal, HTC has confirmed that all orders are bundled with two VR experiences that change from time-to-time. Those who order a Vive directly from HTC now will have orders shipped within three working days. That's shipped as in 'leaving the warehouse' not three days to your doorstep, although once shipped it should be with you within a couple of days.

If you're unsure whether the HTC Vive is worth the £599 price tag, there are a number of UK retailers offering the opportunity to trial the hardware before parting with your cash. Specifically, anybody can walk into any of the following stores and try out the HTC Vive before ordering from the retailer directly (which should save you the £57.60 delivery fee!):

- Currys PC World, Leeds (Birstall)
- Currys PC World, Reading
- Currys PC World, Tottenham Court Road
- Overclockers UK, Newcastle-under-Lyme
- Scan Computers International Ltd, Bolton

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Design and build

So, what makes the HTC Vive Pre different to other virtual reality headsets that are on the market? Let's first discuss the design of the headset. The HTC Vive headset is extremely comfortable to wear and features soft, memory foam-esque material around the edges to avoid any kind of skin irritation when being worn. The material can be easily switched out thanks to the use of Velcro, and the company provides users with two fits – wide and thin – for different shaped faces.



It's matte black in colour, and while no VR headset will ever look gorgeous, the HTC Vive does a 'pretty' good job. The outside is clad with sensors that help the base stations (which we come to below) track your exact location within the virtual space, and comes with a supported head strap that should take some of the weight off the front of your face.

The strap is easily adjustable again thanks to the use of Velcro, and users can adjust the distance between the eyes via a little dial on the side of the headset. All this should provide users with something that's comfortable on the face, and can be used for a long period of time with no complaints (which in our experience, it has).

As well as receiving the headset, HTC also provides users with two handheld controllers. The controllers are nothing like the Xbox One controller provided with the Oculus Rift, but instead are designed to be versatile and used in a number of different ways in the virtual world.

The controllers' feature triggers, a touch-enabled circular panel and a couple of physical buttons with the built-in sensors allowing the controllers to be tracked in the virtual space almost perfectly. This allows users to reach out and directly interact with objects in the virtual world, which is a fascinating experience and one that is incredibly hard to describe.

The only real downside to the design of the HTC Vive is that it's wired and not wireless. When we went hands-on with a pre-release HTC Vive, we actually tripped over the wire and damaged the cable connecting the headset to the PC – not an ideal situation, especially for consumers.

HTC has combatted this issue with the consumer HTC Vive by featuring a camera on the headset that can be toggled on and off, allowing users to observe the physical world on top of the virtual world. This means if you feel the cable wrapping around your leg, simply look down and you can untangle yourself without having to take the headset off. That's just one example of course, but the idea is simple. Simple, but effective.



However, the inclusion of such a heavy duty cable is still disappointing. You can always feel the cable running down your back and in fast paced games or games that require you to constantly turn, it's easy to get tangled. We accept that the technology isn't quite there yet and it's both too expensive and too difficult to create a lightweight wireless headset, but we feel that until it does, room scale VR won't be as immersive as it can be. You can be shooting robots or working in a 2050 office simulation and either way if you feel that cable wrap around your leg, it'll ruin the magic of the experience – in our case anyway.

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