

Honor rang in 2020 by launching the [Honor 9X](#) in India, alongside the [Honor Magic Watch 2](#) smartwatch and the [Honor Band 5i](#). The Honor 9X succeeds the Honor 8X, and brings some notable upgrades such as a faster SoC, a full-screen display, better cameras, and a larger battery, to name a few. Starting at Rs. 13,999, the Honor 9X offers a compelling package in terms of hardware and design. However, it goes up against some well-received rivals from [Xiaomi](#), [Realme](#), [Nokia](#), and [Vivo](#). Does the Honor 9X have what it takes to stand out and disrupt the segment? Read our in-depth assessment of the phone's merits and demerits to find out.

Honor 9X design and build quality

Design is one of the key selling points of the [Honor 9X](#) ₹ 13,999. The 3D geometric pattern on the Sapphire Blue review unit that we have looks like an X when light falls on it. Each adjacent line appears to be a different shade of blue, creating a depth effect, and it does look unique compared to the gradient patterns on a wide range of phones out there. On closer inspection, one can see small diamond-shaped blocks across the whole rear panel that shimmer under the light. While the aesthetics are undoubtedly flashy, this does give the Honor 9X an identity of its own. The company also offers the Honor 9X in a more sober Midnight Black finish as well.



Honor 9X's rear panel is made of plastic with a glossy finish, and it gets smudged quickly

The rear panel is made out of plastic and has a glossy finish. Needless to say, the entire back can get smudged easily, and our unit had fingerprint marks all over it in no time. The sides are curved and meet smoothly with the rim, which also has a glossy finish in

a matching colour. Thankfully, the phone is not too slippery. The three camera lenses are housed in a vertical strip, and the entire module protrudes ever so slightly.

The fingerprint sensor is positioned comfortably within reach, and was pleasantly quick at unlocking the phone. The USB Type-C port, speaker, and 3.5mm jack are at the bottom, while the SIM tray is at the top. The volume buttons have a clicky feel, but the power button is a bit too small in proportion and feels a little mushy.

Over on the front is the 6.59-inch full-HD display that has a notch-free design. In this price bracket, the [Honor 9X](#) is among the only few phones that offer a full-screen experience, and we are definitely not complaining. Honor told Gadgets 360 that the display is protected by a material developed by [Huawei](#) and used in its phones, but did not reveal the name. The phone comes with a pre-applied screen protector, but it got scratched and picked up smudges all over really quickly. Also, we found it a bit difficult to reach all parts of the screen with one hand.

Honor 9X specifications and software

The Honor 9X suffers from an identity crisis of sorts, which can be attributed to the Huawei-Honor relationship and some confusing marketing decisions. As we pointed out in our [first impressions](#) of the phone, the Honor 9X is almost identical to the [Huawei Y9 Prime \(2019\)](#) which was launched in India in August last year, the only difference being rear camera resolutions, and even shares the same model number.



Honor 9X comes equipped with a 16-megapixel pop-up selfie camera

It also shares hardware similarities with the [Huawei P Smart Z](#) sold in China, and even has the exact same dimensions. To complicate things even more, the Honor 9X sold in

India is the phone's global variant, and has completely different specifications compared to the device of the same name sold in China.

Talking about specifications, the Honor 9X packs a 6.59-inch full-HD (1080 x 2340 pixels) display with a notchless full-screen design. This is an IPS LCD panel certified by TÜV Rheinland for reducing blue light exposure. The phone is powered by Huawei's in-house Kirin 710F processor, and has up to 6GB of RAM and 128GB of storage which is expandable by up to 512GB using a microSD card. The base 4GB 128GB variant is priced at Rs. 13,999 in India, while the 6GB 128GB configuration will set buyers back by Rs. 16,999.

The rear camera setup includes a 48-megapixel main shooter with an f/1.8 aperture. There is also an 8-megapixel wide-angle camera with a 120-degree field of view and a 2-megapixel depth sensor for portrait shots. On the front is a 16-megapixel camera housed in a pop-up module. The juice is provided by a 4,000mAh battery, and there's 10W charging support.

On the software side, the Honor 9X runs EMUI 9.1 based on Android Pie. Honor has told Gadgets 360 that an Android 10 update should be released soon, "maybe by next month". It is interesting to note that this phone doesn't report the software name as Magic UI, which is the rebranded version of EMUI that Honor models usually run. The UI is similar to what we came across in our [Honor 20 review](#). To start with, there is no app drawer. Swiping left opens the Google feed, while swiping right shows more pages of app icons.



Honor 9X has a triple rear camera setup with a 48-megapixel primary camera

Some of the preinstalled apps such as Ride Mode, Downloads, and Optimiser for file management are useful. However, there is way too much bloatware. First-party apps such as App Gallery, Honor Club, Honor Store, and iTips are barely useful. As for the

third-party apps, the likes of Opera News, Booking.com, Wego Flights & Hotels, and Helo aren't going to appeal to everyone.

Thankfully, the third-party apps can be uninstalled, but the in-house ones can't. The navigation gestures worked flawlessly for us, and there's an App Twin feature for creating two instances of an app.

Honor 9X performance

Performance is an area in which the Honor 9X proved to be a mixed bag. App-switching was smooth even with 10-15 applications running in the background. Apps loaded quickly as well, but some jitter was noticeable when games were running in the background. The UI was generally lag-free, but the RAM management proved to be a bit too aggressive on a few occasions.

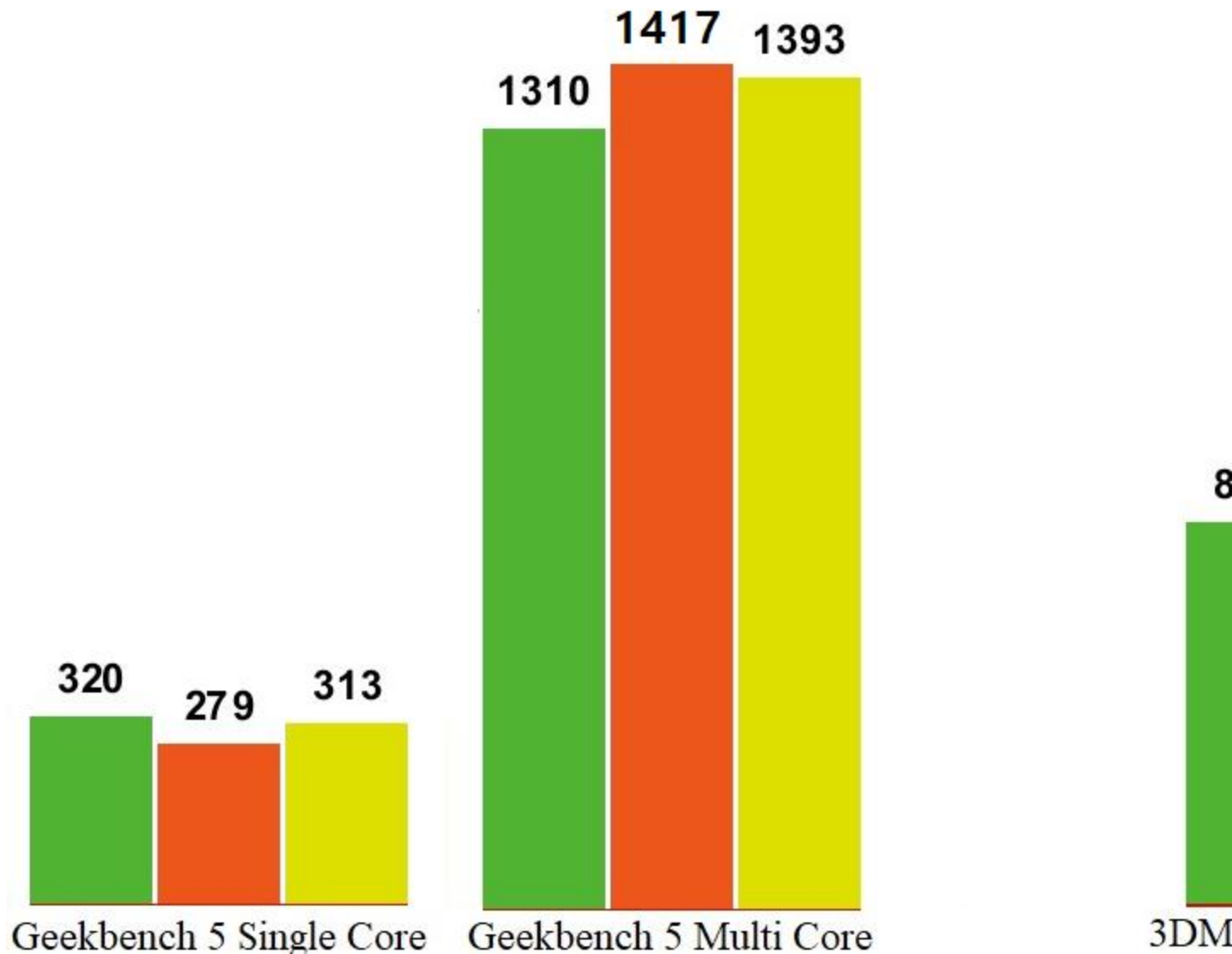
The Kirin 710F feels underpowered in terms of graphics. PUBG Mobile defaulted to the Medium graphics preset, but the visuals looked choppy, and frame drops and stutters were easily noticeable. Call of Duty: Mobile was set to the low graphics settings by default, and even though the experience was better than PUBG Mobile, we have seen better performance from other phones in this price range. We wish Huawei had gone with a more powerful SoC.

This lack of firepower reflects in synthetic benchmarks as well. The Honor 9X scored 320 and 1,310 in Geekbench 5's single-core and multi-core tests. This performance is comparable to that of the Qualcomm Snapdragon 665 and MediaTek Helio P70.

However, in the graphics-intensive 3DMark Sling Shot and Sling Shot Extreme tests, the Honor 9X could only muster up scores of 1,111 and 864 respectively, which are significantly lower than those of the two aforementioned chips. Here's a chart to depict the Kirin 710F's benchmark performance:

 Honor 9X
Kirin 710F

 Oppo F15
MediaTek Helio P70



Honor 9X's Kirin 710F SoC lags behind when it comes to graphics power

As for display quality, Honor 9X's LCD display is among the better ones on phones we have seen in this price bracket. The full-HD resolution means that this panel is sufficiently sharp. Colour reproduction is on point, and viewing angles are acceptable as well. The notchless design is great for watching videos and playing games.

The only shortcoming is sub-par brightness, which hampers outdoor visibility and makes colours look muted under direct sunlight. The display section in the Settings app lets users adjust the colour profile and temperature, but we found that the 'Vivid' mode imparts a bluish tinge to whites, and makes colours appear washed-out.

The Honor 9X comes equipped with a sufficiently long-lasting 4,000mAh battery. With our regular usage, which involved intermittent social media usage and messaging all day, a couple of hours of music streaming, and around an hour of gaming, the Honor 9x lasted a day and a half on average. When paired with a smartwatch with Bluetooth and location tracking enabled throughout the day, the phone's battery life went down but it still had around 20-25 percent left at the end of the day.

Your mileage will vary depending upon usage patterns, but even with heavy usage, the Honor 9X will easily sail past a day on each charge. In our HD video battery loop test, the Honor 9x lasted a slightly underwhelming 12 hours and 37 minutes before the battery discharged completely. The phone comes with a 10W charger, which takes over two hours to fully charge the phone. We have seen phones from Xiaomi and Realme offer faster charging in the same price bracket.

Honor 9X cameras

On paper, the Honor 9X offers fairly impressive cameras for its price, but the actual output is a mixed bag. The main 48-megapixel camera takes 12-megapixel pixel-binned photos by default. These shots looked okay, with decent contrast and dynamic range, but average details at best. The camera app's AI mode tends to boost contrast and saturation, so we had to manually turn it off to capture accurate colours.

In the case of actual 48-megapixel photos, details were better, but at the cost of noise. What we didn't like was the oversharpening done to the photos, making them appear noticeably soft. We also often got blander colours in photos captured at the full 48-megapixel resolution under direct sunlight. Autofocus was reliable in daylight, but in low-light scenarios, we had to deal with some focusing errors.



Indoor sample taken with the Honor 9X (tap for full-sized image)



Close-up HDR sample taken with the Honor 9X (tap for full-sized image)



Daylight sample taken with the Honor 9X (tap for full-sized image)



Selfie sample taken with the Honor 9X (tap for full-sized image)

We have seen noticeably better colour reproduction, sharpness, and dynamic range captured by the 48-megapixel cameras on the Redmi Note 8 ₹ 11,470 and the Realme 5 Pro. Honor has not specified the make of the sensor it has used.

The 8-megapixel wide-angle camera comes in handy for bringing more objects into a frame. The images captured are again just average, but there was a noticeable difference between the colour tone of photos captured by the main camera and wide-

angle shots of the same scene, particularly when it came to handling greenery and bright colours. Distortion was also an issue. Honor says that the Honor 9X uses distortion correction algorithms, but warping was evident in wide-angle photos. They also turned out less sharp.

The 2-megapixel depth sensor does a decent job at delivering a depth-of-field effect in photos. There is a dedicated aperture mode in the camera app that lets users adjust the intensity of the blur effect. It does a good job of highlighting an object or person in the foreground, but edge detection is not always accurate. Other camera modes include slo-mo, light painting, moving picture, and stickers.

The biggest surprise to us was the dedicated night mode. Photos captured using the night mode exhibited better details and colours were brought out more, but they look grainy on zooming in, and are soft around the corners. Depending upon the ambient light, the night mode takes up to four seconds to capture multiple exposures at various levels, and delivers a final composited image that is significantly better than what you could capture in the standard photo mode.

The standard photo mode can also detect low-light scenarios and raise the ISO level, but this blows away the real colours. In fact, the Honor 9X's night mode is one of the better implementations of this feature in the sub-Rs. 15,000 price bracket.