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LG G Flex 2

The LG G Flex 2 was the hottest [smartphone](#) of CES, by a long shot. The second-generation curved phone took last year's peculiar G Flex phablet and tamed it, improving the screen and shrinking the body down to a size where most people would actually want to use it as a phone.

The phone's specs pretty neatly make it an LG G3-and-a-half. As the first phone with a Qualcomm Snapdragon 810 processor, it fills the gap between last year's [LG G3](#) and the upcoming G4, which is rumored to come out this spring. And it gives LG something to go up against Samsung's fresh Galaxy S6, which will be announced at Mobile World Congress on March 1.

We don't review non-U.S. models of phones because they can be significantly different from U.S. units. But because this is the first Snapdragon 810 phone and the highest-profile smartphone of the month, we took a close look at the G Flex 2. Here's a hands on preview of what we felt we could test, and what U.S. consumers should watch out for in other "reviews" of this non-U.S. unit. We'll score it once we see it picked up by a U.S. carrier.

Regarding our experience testing, LG asked us to put this statement into our story.

"The devices sampled are representative of final industrial design and user experience but are continuing to undergo additional optimizations to enhance benchmark performance. We expect our upcoming software releases to provide further improvements in this area. We remain confident that the G Flex 2 will deliver great experiences to our customers with a tremendous blend of multimedia, performance and industry-leading design."

[View all Photos in Gallery](#)

What You Can Test

How does it feel in the hand? Slippery. The G Flex 2 is a real eye-catcher, because of the curve, and especially in the rich red color (which is the color you should buy). It's exactly the same width as the LG G3 at 2.95 inches, and just a touch longer. The back panel is genuinely slippery, though, as compared with the more matte texture of the G3 (or the truly textured Galaxy Note series), which makes the G Flex a touch hard to handle.

The screen. A 5.5-inch 1080p screen isn't going to rock anyone's world in this day and age, now that the G3 and Samsung Galaxy Note 4, among others, have quad-HD screens. But the G Flex 2's curve really does reduce reflectivity, which combines with the OLED panel's naturally deep blacks to produce rich colors. The screen may not be the highest-density you've ever seen, but it feels luxurious.

The self-healing, flexing back. The G Flex 2's back is slippery because it's supposedly self-healing. To test the back, I put a screen protector on the screen (it isn't a self-healing screen) and shook the phone around in a plastic bag with my keys for 30 seconds. While the screen protector was then covered in small dents, blemishes on the back rubbed right off. LG says it has sped up the self-healing time to 10 seconds, and my test bore that out. The G Flex 2 also flexes, like the original model. I leaned on it to flatten it out, and it bounced right back (as the video below shows).

[See How We Test Cell Phones](#)

Processor performance. Well, almost. We got wildly inconsistent benchmark results on our G Flex 2 unit, to the point where we couldn't draw many conclusions. One thing was clear: Browser performance, as measured by the Sunspider and Browsermark benchmarks, was the best we've seen on any Android phone so far. Beyond that, the benchmarks pitched, yawed, rolled, and crashed all over the map. After I spoke to LG and Qualcomm, the manufacturers decided that I'd probably received a defective unit, and decided to send me another. However, that unit is currently stuck in a snowstorm in Louisville, KY. I'll do a benchmark story when UPS digs it out.



The camera. The G Flex 2 has a 13-megapixel main camera and 2-megapixel front camera. Autofocus is nearly instantaneous. While the simulated outdoor shots we took in the labs looked blown out, the camera did better in the real outdoors, with generally sharp images, although the shutter speed could have been higher. The front camera was also very sharp, but tended to blow the more reflective areas of my forehead out.

In low light, the front camera did an admirable job of capturing some sort of image even in a very dark room. It was soft, sure, but not ugly or blurry. The same goes for flash photos taken with the main camera.

As can be expected, the video mode records 1080p30 video from the front camera in most circumstances, and 4k30 video using the main camera indoors and out. 4K video recording is limited to 5 minutes by the camera app, though.

Some of the software. LG's skin over Android 5.0 is many kinds of heavy. A few new features are quite cool. With the phone's screen off, swiping down reveals the time, signal and any notification icons. (LG calls that Glimpse.) You can unlock the phone using a Knock Code sequence of taps on the screen, and you can jump to five different apps directly from the lock screen. So far, so good.

LG's multi-window QSlide multitasking is getting baroque in its options, though: You can spawn multiple, resizable windows of apps and then control their opacity. Maybe that's a little too customizable. And the new flat-design calendar, contacts, and messaging apps simply aren't as beautiful as the stock Android 5.0 apps.

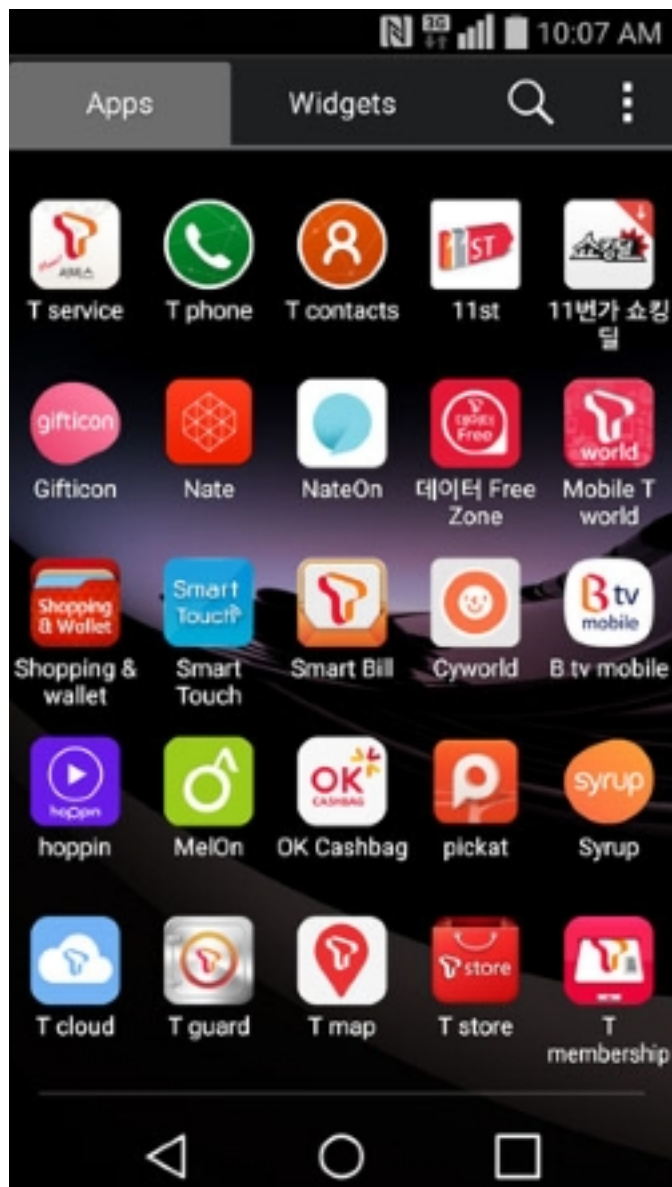
What You Can't Test

Voice call quality. As I saw at Samsung's testing labs last year, phones are tuned for the countries they're going to be distributed in. American phones, for instance, [have more treble](#) than UK models. So, voice calls on a Korean import phone may not accurately reflect the experience when the phone is retuned for the U.S.

I made some calls on this phone. The earpiece sounded loud enough, but scratchy on the T-Mobile network, without much side tone. Transmissions through the mic sounded clear, with good noise cancellation. The speakerphone is of medium volume and had very poor noise cancellation through its mic. But the whole thing could easily be re-tuned for the U.S. market.

Network connections. Plugging my T-Mobile SIM into the Korean phone, I was hobbled down to what felt like 3G HSPA 7.2, with download speeds of about 3Mbps and upload speeds not breaking 1Mbps. Needless to say, that's not going to be the experience when we get the U.S. models. The phone also has 802.11ac Wi-Fi.

Battery life. There's no way to know battery life if the phone isn't connected to its optimal network. The G Flex 2 has a relatively large 3,000mAh battery, which promises long life considering the relatively low-density and power-sipping OLED screen. I hold out hope.



Most of the software. This unit is completely laden with Korean bloatware—an entire page of undeletable Korea-specific apps. The keyboard and error messages default to Korean. Also, we've seen in the past that LG has changed its own Android skin between Korean and U.S. units. For instance, it removed the multitasking browser on the original G Pro when it came to the U.S. The bloatware also means only 23.3GB of the phone's 32GB is free for users here.

Bugs. My G Flex 2 unit, as I said before, was buggy. The messaging app crashed on launch, the USB connector was a bit loose, and the phone gave wildly varying benchmark results. Presumably, the U.S. carriers will work out these bugs before they bring the phone to market.

Price. Of course, we don't know what we're really comparing it with if we don't know the U.S. price.

Conclusions

The G Flex 2 is an interesting high-midrange phone with a striking design. Thanks to its new Snapdragon 810 processor, its performance might measure up to the Galaxy S6 (although we'll have to see). Web browsing, especially, looks really amped up, and that's great. I'm not too bothered by the lower-resolution screen.

If it costs less than the S6, the G Flex 2 could be an excellent alternative in terms of a classy, high-end Android phone. For us to be sure, though, we're going to have to see the real U.S. units, when they come to AT&T and Sprint, and check out how they perform. Stay tuned.