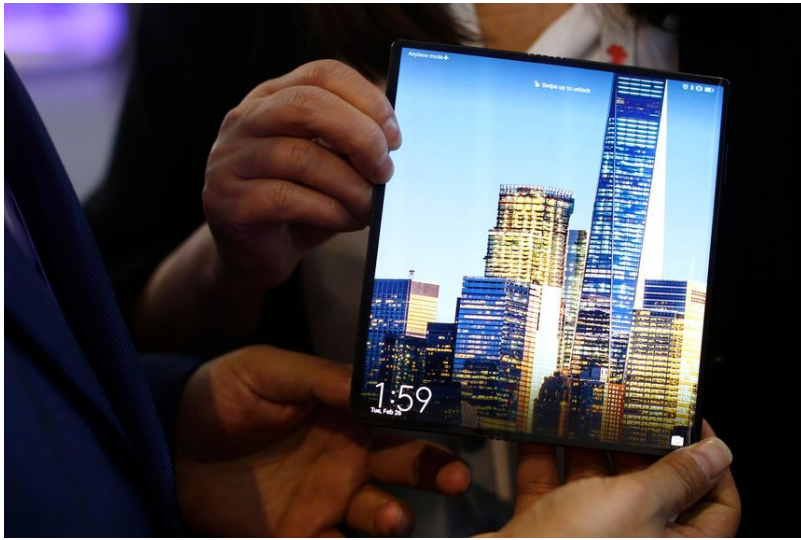


GEAR & GADGETS

# Huawei to Begin Selling Folding Smartphone After Monthslong Delay

High-end Mate X to go on sale in China on Nov. 15 for about \$2,400 as maker weighs when to offer it elsewhere



Huawei's Mate X foldable 5G smartphone, as displayed earlier this year. PHOTO: MANU FERNANDEZ/ASSOCIATED PRESS

*By Dan Strumpf*

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HONG KONG—Huawei Technologies Co. will begin selling its first-ever foldable smartphone in China next month, hoping that consumers will continue to be drawn to the high-end device after months of delays.

The Shenzhen-based technology giant will begin selling the Mate X handset for 16,999 yuan (about \$2,400) on Nov. 15, the company said Wednesday. Huawei said it is still reviewing when the phone—unveiled at a glitzy launch in Barcelona in February—will go on sale in other markets.

The 5G-capable Mate X will be the second foldable device from a major smartphone maker this year, following Samsung Electronics Co. 's nearly \$2,000 Galaxy Fold. The smartphone industry is touting foldable devices as the latest innovation in handset hardware, though early technology glitches and the devices' high price tags could limit their appeal, analysts said.

Huawei was originally set to begin selling the Mate X in June but delayed the release in part to fine-tune the screen, the device's most intricate component. That followed a delay in the launch of the Galaxy Fold after reviewers reported problems with the device's hinge, and others said the phone's display was easily ripped off.

"It's definitely not a price for everyone, but there is a ultrahigh-end user group in China" that the Mate X could appeal to, said Mo Jia, an analyst at market-research firm Canalys. He said Huawei could "easily sell a few hundred thousand units, if it doesn't encounter any product defects as the Galaxy Fold did."

Huawei said it has shipped more than 200 million smartphones to date this year. Huawei is the world's No. 2 smartphone vendor behind Samsung, and is also the world's largest maker of cellular equipment. Its sales are negligible in the U.S., which U.S. officials have effectively blocked it from entering.

The smartphone industry has been in a prolonged slump, with consumers showing diminished enthusiasm for new models and delaying the purchase of new devices. Industrywide shipments declined 4.4% during the first six months of the year from a year earlier, according to International Data Corp.

Huawei bucked that trend, with shipments up 26% in the first half of the year, according to IDC. Analysts attribute the company's success in large part to booming sales in mainland China following several Trump administration actions against the tech giant.

Those include the addition of Huawei to the U.S. Commerce Department's "entity list," blocking suppliers from exporting U.S.-sourced hardware and software to Huawei, on national-security grounds. Huawei has long denied that it is a national-security threat.

Huawei's blacklisting means that newly launched Huawei smartphones can run only on an open-source version of the Google Android operating system, free of many popular apps, software and the Google Play app store. Because the Mate X was officially unveiled in February—before the U.S. blacklisting took effect in May—it will contain a proprietary version of the operating system and the typical suite of Google apps, a Huawei spokesman said.

Huawei announced the selling date of the Mate X on the company's Weibo and QQ social-media platforms on Wednesday, alongside a series of images of the handset open and closed. The device contains a single large screen that opens to look like a small tablet. When it folds in two, half of the screen can still be used.

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