

Pixel 8 review: Google's smaller, longer-lasting Android

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Google's standard Pixel 8 gets a little smaller, faster and smarter, while lasting longer than the competition with seven years of updates. The new Android costs £699 (€799/\$699/A\$1,199) – a £100 increase on last year's model – but still undercuts the competition from Samsung and Apple, which cost about £800. By shrinking a little compared with the outgoing model, the Pixel 8 has become one of the few smaller premium phones available. The 6.2in 120Hz OLED screen is bright, crisp and smooth while still being large enough for apps and video. The rounded aluminium sides and curved glass back feel nice and are easy to hold. The phone has the same upgraded 2D face unlock system as the Pixel 8 Pro, with a fast and good under-display fingerprint scanner. It has Google's latest Tensor G3 chip, which performed great at day-to-day tasks and handled games easily. The battery lasts slightly longer than its predecessor at about 36 hours between charges. It takes about 80 minutes to charge fully using a 30W power adaptor (not included), hitting 50% in less than 30 minutes. Specifications Screen: 6.2in 120Hz FHD+ OLED (428ppi) Processor: Google Tensor G3 RAM: 8GB Storage: 128 or 256GB Operating system: Android 14 Camera: 50MP + 12MP ultrawide, 10.5MP selfie Connectivity: 5G, eSIM, wifi 7, NFC, Bluetooth 5.3 and GNSS Water resistance: IP68 (1.5m for 30 minutes) Dimensions: 150.5 x 70.8 x 8.9mm Weight: 187g Android 14 with seven years of updates The big upgrade for the Pixel phones this year is the promise of seven years of Android and security updates, meaning they will be safe to use until at least October 2030. Few others offers as long, bringing Google up to par with Apple's iPhones – with only Fairphone providing longer at 10 years of support. Extended support means you can keep the phone longer and its resale value for the second- and third-hand market will probably be much higher. Google has packed the Pixel 8 with many of its new generative AI features including various image and video editing tools, new abilities for its voice assistant and more promised in updates in the near future. For more on the Magic Editor and other features, please see the Pixel 8 Pro review. Camera The Pixel 8 has the same excellent main camera as the 8 Pro, which includes a 2x optical zoom using the centre of the sensor. It is a big upgrade on predecessors, offering better low-light performance and faster, sharper shots. The 12MP ultra-wide camera is also solid and now used for a fun macrophotography mode for closeup shots of objects. The Pixel 8 also gets most of the same generative AI tools as the 8 Pro including Best Take, Magic Editor and Audio Magic Eraser. But it lacks full manual control in the camera app and some more advanced features. Overall, the Pixel 8's camera is one of the best on the market but the lack of an optical zoom lens is disappointing. Sustainability Google does not provide an expected lifespan for the battery but it should last in excess of 500 full-charge cycles with at least 80% of its original capacity. The phone is repairable by Google and third-party shops, with genuine replacement parts to be available from iFixit soon. Out-of-warranty screen replacements from Google cost £66 and batteries £36.

The Pixel 8 is made with at least 18% recycled materials, including aluminium, plastic and tin. The company breaks down the phone's environmental impact in its report. Google will recycle old devices free of charge. Price The Google Pixel 8 costs from £699 (€799/\$699/A\$1,199). For comparison the Pixel 7a costs £449, the Pixel 8 Pro costs £999, the Samsung Galaxy S23 costs £849, the Fairphone 5 costs £649 and the iPhone 15 costs £799. Verdict The Pixel 8 is not quite the same smashing bargain its predecessors once were – that honour is now the realm of the Pixel 7a – but it still offers a lot of phone for the money. The fit, finish and feel is top notch. The phone is responsive and smooth. The battery life is decent. The main camera is excellent but the lack of an extended optical zoom is slightly disappointing, even if it has been a similar formula for Google for several years. The 6.2in screen moves the Pixel 8 closer to the underserved market of smaller but top-end phones, of which there are only a handful to choose from. Google's generative AI features are certainly novel, but it is the extended seven-year software support that truly sets it apart. It does not shine quite as bright as its bigger sibling but the Pixel 8 is still a great smaller phone worth looking at. Pros: seven years of software updates, good camera, great screen in smaller body, solid battery life, recycled aluminium, impressive local and generative AI features, undercuts rivals on price. Cons: price increase, no extended optical zoom for camera, 2D face unlock not as advanced as 3D scanners, raw performance short of best in class.