

Apple unveils 15in MacBook Air, iOS 17 and revamped watchOS 10

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Apple has announced a range of new updates to its iPhone, iPad and smartwatch software alongside a new larger 15in MacBook Air laptop, M2 Ultra Mac Pro and upgraded Mac Studio desktop computers. During the opening presentation of the company's annual developer conference in Cupertino, California, Apple launched features for new and existing devices, alongside its much-rumoured Vision Pro mixed-reality headset. 15in MacBook Air, M2 Ultra Mac Pro and Mac Studio Apple took the wraps off an also-anticipated MacBook Air with a larger 15.3in screen. It has a similar design to its smaller 13in sibling – using the same M2 chips and two Thunderbolt ports, making it the world's thinnest 15in laptop, according to Apple. The MacBook Air has become Apple's consumer laptop with the Pro line sitting above it with many more ports and capabilities at a considerably higher price. The 15in MacBook Air costs from £1,399 in the UK and \$1,299 in the US and is aimed at consumers who want a larger screen. It sits in between the 14in and 16in MacBook Pros in size and competes with a variety of PC laptops of a similar size. The Mac Studio mini power desktop also got an upgrade with new, more powerful M2 Max and Ultra chips. They are a direct replacement for the M1-series chips in the machines launched last year, aimed at developers and creative professionals. The Mac Studio will cost £2,099 in the UK and \$1,999 in the US. Apple also finally launched its most powerful Mac Pro desktop with Apple Silicon chips. The new tower or rack-mounted computer ships with the M2 Ultra chip, but has traditional PCI expansion-card support for adding the various cards needed by video producers and other professional users. The Mac Pro will start at £7,199 in the UK and \$6,999 in the US. Ben Wood, chief analyst for CCS Insight, said: "The new Mac computers underline that the investments made in Apple Silicon are delivering valuable returns. Apple's vertically integrated approach across semiconductors, software and hardware continues to give it an advantage over rivals. It's a daunting situation for other chipmakers, most notably Intel, and for rival PC makers." iOS 17 The next version of the iPhone's software will include a variety of new features, including accessibility tools such as Personal Voice, which allows users to create a synthetic replica of their own voice. Other features include new contact posters, which include your photo, text and customisable colours that show up on recipients' phones and in their contacts app when you make a call. Apple has added the ability to automatically transcribe voicemail messages in real time so that you can see who is calling and what it's about before picking up the call. FaceTime callers can also now leave video voicemails if the recipient isn't available. Check In is a new safety feature that allows you to share your location with friends or family, which automatically detects when you get home and lets them know. If the system sees you are delayed it can then send information to your contact such as your location, battery life and other bits so they can help. The keyboard has also been improved allowing in-line sentence

prediction as you type, similar to the system offered by Google in its Gmail app. The keyboard will also learn from your phrases and words to customise autocorrect suggestions. The new Standby mode can turn the iPhone into a small smart display when it is turned in landscape while charging, showing the time, widgets, photos and other information at a glance, including Siri interactions. Apple also made changes to its AirDrop sharing system so that you can send files or your contact details by just bringing two iPhones or an Apple Watch near each other. The transfer can continue over the internet if you go out of range of each other. Apple also added offline maps to Apple Maps, and announced a new, AI-assisted mood-tracking Journal app – available later in the year – which automatically suggests the activities you might want to record. Apple added new features for its AirPods Pro including adaptive noise cancelling that adjusts to levels of background noise, automatic conversation detection and a personalised volume system. FaceTime will also be available on the Apple TV for the first time, using the iPhone or iPad camera for the video call. The software will be available in public beta in July with a full release for compatible iPhones in September. iPadOS 17 Apple's tablets gain most of the new features from iOS 17, including the enhancements to the keyboard and FaceTime. But for iPadOS 17 Apple has brought across some of the most interesting features introduced with iOS 16 last year, including widgets, lockscreen customisation, live events and multiple timers. It also added the Health app to the iPad, which will aid the tablet's use in healthcare settings, and enhanced its pdf support designed to ease form filling, including signatures. Apple also improved its Stage Manager multitasking system, including the ability to use webcams in external displays. The software will also be available in public beta in July with a full release for compatible iPads likely in October. macOS Sonoma Mac computers will gain many of the new features from iPad and iPhone, but one of the biggest additions is the introduction of advanced widgets to the desktop. Any widget can now be placed straight on the desktop including those from apps installed on the iPhone. Apple is also adding the stunning slow-motion video screensavers that have proved popular on the Apple TV, including matching desktop wallpaper. Video calls are getting a boost with the ability to overlay a view of your face on your shared screen, including in third-party apps, plus smart, gesture-triggered reactions such as a firework simulation when you put both thumbs up. macOS also has a new dedicated gaming mode, which prioritises games on the computer's CPU and GPU for smoother frame rates. It will also lower the audio latency with AirPods and input latency with Xbox and PlayStation controllers. The new mode forms part of Apple's push to get high-profile games on the Mac, including a new game-porting toolkit for developers and the announcement that marquee-game Death Stranding Director's Cut is coming to the Mac later this year. An update to the Safari browser will add profiles, similar to features available on rivals, with different collections of favourites, cookies and extensions for each profile, such as one for work and one for personal use. Safari can also now install websites as separate web apps, much like Chrome, allowing them to send notifications and appearing as an icon on the dock. A public beta for macOS Sonoma will be available in July with a full release in the autumn. watchOS 10 The Apple Watch is now eight years old and watchOS is getting its biggest update in some time. The new software will bring widgets front and centre. Turning the digital crown from the watch face brings up a scrolling smart stack of widgets for things such as the weather, calendar and activity tracking, as well as active events such as timers. Two new watch faces have been added, including the colourful Palette and an animated Snoopy and Woodstock face. Apps are now more animated and with fuller views designed to take advantage of the bigger screens on recent watches, such as dynamic background colours for time zones in the clock app or full-screen views of each metric in the activity app. Apple is also adding support for Bluetooth sensors for cycling, such as cadence and power meters, and new features for hiking such as topographic maps. The Mindfulness app can now log your emotions and moods. CCS Insight's Wood said: "The updated Cycling app is further evidence of Apple's determination to erode Garmin's share of sports watches, allowing cycling enthusiasts to measure their functional threshold power and monitor power output, automatically transferring them to the screen on an iPhone." The software update will be available in public beta in July with a full release later this year.