

Apple iPhone 15 review: a few more pro features each year

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The iPhone 15 continues Apple's slow trickling down of features previously reserved for its top Pro-line phones to other models. But even with the new dynamic island, improved camera, a faster chip and USB-C, the standard iPhone can't escape seeming just a little bit boring. The regular iPhone for 2023 gets a £50 price cut in the UK costing £799 (€949/\$799/A\$1,499), although other regions aren't so lucky. That makes it about £200 cheaper than the similarly sized iPhone 15 Pro, with a plus-sized version also available for about £100 more. The 15 has the same combination of aluminium and glass as the last few years of iPhones. The aluminium edges have been chamfered this year for a softer feel, although only if you don't put it in a case. The screen is twice as bright as previous models, making it easier to read outdoors, but it lacks the always-on display mode and faster refresh rate for smoother scrolling from the Pro iPhone models and Android competitors of this price. The six-year-old notch design at the top of the screen that hid the selfie camera and Face ID system has been replaced by the smaller dynamic island, which was first introduced on the iPhone 14 Pro last year. It is useful for showing timers and other bits and easier to ignore when not needed. The mute switch in the side remains for the 15, having been replaced by a button for the Pro models this year. The phone also has the 14 Pro's A16 Bionic chip from last year, which is still one of the fastest available and keeps the phone feeling snappy. The battery lasts about the same as the iPhone 14 – up to 48 hours – which is pretty good for a relatively small smartphone in 2023. It means you will need to charge the iPhone 15 about every two days, which takes about 110 minutes from flat using a 20W or greater USB-C power adaptor (not included). New for this year is the USB-C port, which, like the other iPhones for 2023 means ditching the Lightning cable and any accessories you might have. The benefit is you can charge the iPhone 15 with just about any power adaptor and USB-C cable, including those for laptops, tablets and Android phones, not only Apple devices. You can also use a host of USB-C accessories, such as game controllers, SD card readers and display cables, although note that the iPhone 15 is limited to the same USB2.0 speeds as previous Lightning-equipped models. Specifications Screen: 6.1in Super Retina XDR (OLED) (460ppi) Processor: Apple A16 Bionic RAM: 6GB Storage: 128, 256 or 512GB Operating system: iOS 17 Camera: 48MP + 12MP rear, 12MP front-facing camera Connectivity: 5G, wifi 6, NFC, Bluetooth 5.3, USB-C (2.0), Satellite, UWB and GNSS Water resistance: IP68 (6 metres for 30 mins) Dimensions: 147.8 x 71.6 x 7.8mm Weight: 171g Sustainability Apple says the battery should last in excess of 500 full-charge cycles with at least 80% of its original capacity and can be replaced for £95. Out-of-warranty screen repairs cost £289. It contains recycled aluminium, cobalt, copper, gold, plastic, rare earth elements, tin and tungsten. The company breaks down the phone's environmental impact in its report. Apple offers trade-in and

free recycling schemes, including for non-Apple products. Upgraded dual-camera The iPhone 15 has a dual-camera system on the back, which features an improved 48-megapixel main camera plus a 12MP ultrawide similar to last year's model. The main camera shoots 24MP images by default, up from 12MP, and produces better-looking and more detailed images across various lighting conditions. It can shoot full 48MP images, which is best done very bright light, and has the 2x optical zoom from last year's Pro models, which zooms in on the centre of the sensor. Perhaps a bigger deal is that the main photo mode now automatically captures depth information when it detects people or pets, allowing you refocus the images and turn them into portrait mode shots when editing them after the fact. It also means night mode can be used at the same time for much better portraits in low light. The lack of an extended optical zoom holds the standard iPhone back, remaining the reserve of the Pro models alongside their more advanced photography and videography features. But overall the camera captures good-looking photos without much effort. Price The iPhone 15 costs from £799 (€949/\$799/A\$1,499) with 128GB of storage. For comparison, the iPhone 15 Plus costs £899, the iPhone 15 Pro costs £999, the Samsung Galaxy S23 costs £849, the Galaxy Z Flip 5 costs £1,049, the Google Pixel 7 costs £599 and the Fairphone 5 costs £649. Verdict For those with older phones from five or so years ago, the iPhone 15 marks a giant leap forward with a fast chip, long battery life, a crisp and bright display and the more useful USB-C port. The trickle-down effect from the iPhone Pro models also adds a bit of interest. The dynamic island from the 14 Pro certainly improves on the older notch design. The 48MP main camera captures more detail and the automatic portrait mode is a bit of a gamechanger. But the same regular iPhone caveats apply from previous years. No extended zoom is disappointing, no always-on display or high refresh rate for the screen is a miss and the body colour options are a bit too washed out and pale. None of these things are deal killers, but are features found on competitors of this price. The iPhone 15 is a good phone. It's just not as exciting as it should be for the price. For that in an iPhone you need the 15 Pro, or switch and look at Android competitors. Pros: fast, good camera, good screen now with dynamic island, great size, USB-C, great battery life, long software support, Face ID. Cons: no telephoto camera, screen slower than competition and 15 Pro, no always-on display mode, dull colour choice, more repairable design restricted by software locks.