

Garmin Fenix 7 Pro review: top adventure watch puts a torch on your wrist

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Garmin has been on a roll recently, upgrading various versions of its most popular sports smartwatches. Now it is the turn of its top adventure watch to be enhanced with next-gen tech and new tools in the new Fenix 7 Pro. The new torch-equipped, go-anywhere watch costs £750, putting it very much in the luxury category alongside Apple's £849 Watch Ultra and the £800 and up Epix line. That's also £150 more than the cheapest Fenix 7 but roughly in line with the cost of the previous solar-charging models. So what more do you get for your money? Garmin uses its "Pro" models to introduce new tech into its watch line while maintaining the rugged design of the original Fenix 7. It comes in a choice of 42, 47 or 51mm sizes to suit different wrist widths and looks like it means business. The 7 Pro has Garmin's next-gen low-power LCD touchscreen, which is noticeably crisper and easier to read indoors compared to previous solar-charging iterations. It isn't as beautiful as its recent OLED models, but is easier to see in bright sunlight, has solar charging built in and consumes far less power. There's an option for sapphire glass and titanium models for those that need the most durable materials. One of the best additions is the LED light in the top edge of the watch, which debuted exclusively with the ginormous Fenix 7X last year but is now on every size of the the 7 Pro. It is bright enough to be used for finding your way, similar to a phone torch and proves extremely useful in the mundanity of day-to-day life – while poking through cupboards, putting the bins out at night and the like. The LED can also act as a strobing running light, shining white when you swing your arm forward and red when it goes backwards. It won't replace a head torch or chest light, but anything that makes you more visible to cars at night is good. All models of the 7 Pro also have Garmin's best-in-class multi-band GPS that significantly improves tracking accuracy in tricky conditions such as forests or around tall buildings. Specifications Screen: 1.2, 1.3 or 1.4in transfective MIP LCD Case size: 42, 47 or 51mm Case thickness: 14.1 to 14.9mm Band size: 20, 22 or 26mm quick fit Weight: 42 to 68g body only Storage: 32GB Water resistance: 100 metres (10ATM) Sensors: Multi-band GNSS (GPS, Glonass, Galileo), compass, thermometer, heart rate, pulse Ox Connectivity: Bluetooth, ANT+, wifi The back of the watch has Garmin's new fifth-generation optical heart rate monitor, which is wider and with a noticeably different design that makes it more reliable when your wrist is moving or at odd angles. That should help tracking during vigorous or arduous exercise, including lifting weights or cycling. Otherwise the sensor is the most responsive and accurate optical monitor available and very close to being as good as a chest strap for most people. The 7 Pro tracks basically every activity you can think of with a further 30 sport profiles added over the already extensive list from the Fenix 7. It includes full offline mapping on your wrist, both for pre-planned and impromptu routes should you ever get lost, something few competitors offer. The maps have improved steepness markings and

weather conditions can now be overlaid on your location similar to smartphone radar weather maps. New for the 7 Pro, though eventually coming to other models via software updates, are two additional metrics: hill score and endurance score. Hill score is a measure of your ability to run, walk or hike up inclines of 2% or greater, broken up into hill endurance and strength, which broadly indicate your fitness to go the distance or how fast you can manage it. The endurance score is more interesting as a way of comparing yourself to others in a sport agnostic way. All activity counts towards it, measuring duration and intensity, allowing footballers to compete with runners or skiers. Other platforms such as Fitbit have offered similar activity agnostic competition as one of their key social selling points for a while.

Long battery life and solar charging One of the big upsides of having the low-power LCD screen is very long battery life. Used as a smartwatch with notifications from my phone, general activity and sleep tracking, setting timers, using the torch several times a day and other bits, the Fenix 7 Pro easily lasts 16 days. Don't use the torch as much or add in several hours of solar charging a day and you'll get closer to 22 days between charges, which is very impressive. The battery life for running and other sport tracking features is just as generous, lasting up to 136 hours of GPS tracking in its most energy efficient mode or up to 40 days in the special "expedition mode". With daily solar charging it can last even longer. For more regular running the watch consumed around 6-7% of the battery in 80 minutes with its default automatic GPS mode without music or 12% with offline music from Spotify. That works out to at least 22 hours of high-precision tracking, which is certainly long enough for most activities.

Sustainability The Fenix 7 Pro is generally repairable. The battery is rated to last at least a few years of frequent charge cycles while maintaining at least 80% capacity. The watch does not contain any recycled materials. Garmin guarantees at least two years of security updates from release but typically supports its devices far longer. It offers trade-in schemes for some lines and complies with WEEE and other local electronics recycling laws.

Price The Fenix 7 Pro series starts at £749.99 (\$799.99/A\$1,349) and reaches £1,099.99 for the most expensive model. For comparison, the Fenix 7 starts at £560, the Epix Pro starts at £830, the Apple Watch Ultra costs £849, the Coros Vertix 2 costs £599 and the Suunto Vertical costs £545.

Verdict The Fenix 7 Pro is all about cementing Garmin as the top dog of the adventure-watch market, adding its next-gen heart rate sensor and screen tech to the already extremely capable Fenix 7. Solar charging on all models, enhanced maps and the highest-accuracy multi-band GPS are all very welcome. As are the software additions to Garmin's best-in-class sport tracking, extremely long battery life and Android and iPhone support. You may only use 5% of what this watch can do but everyone's 5% will be different. It might sound odd to say that the best feature of a £750 watch is something as simple as the torch built into the top, but it is extremely useful day-to-day and great for running at night. Every watch should have one. The Fenix 7 Pro is therefore the very best adventure smartwatch going, even if it's only marginally better than its already fantastic predecessor. It certainly costs a lot but for some, it'll be worth every penny.

Pros: tracks practically everything, built-in torch, next-gen HR sensor, very long battery life and solar charging, Garmin Pay, full offline mapping, offline Spotify, 100-metre water resistance, buttons and touch, most accurate GPS.

Cons: very expensive, limited Garmin Pay bank support, limited smartwatch features compared with Apple/Google/Samsung watches, no voice control, better screen is basic compared to OLED.