

# Pixel 8 Pro: Google's longer-lasting, AI-packed camera phone

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Google's top Pixel is back to outshoot, outsmart and outlast the competition, promising seven years of full software support. But whether the Pixel 8 Pro's high-end features justify a sharp price increase is open to debate. Costing £999 (€1,099/\$999/A\$1,699), the new Android still undercuts the £1,200 competition from Apple and Samsung, but the £150 jump over last year's stellar 7 Pro stings. The phone features a refined aluminium and glass design. The excellent 6.7in OLED screen is now flat, not curved at the edges as was the case for previous Pixel Pros. It is super smooth for scrolling and can hit an exceptional 2,400nit peak brightness, though only for a few minutes in hot sunshine before dimming to still very readable levels. New for this year is an upgraded 2D face-unlock system now capable of authenticating payments, not just unlocking the phone. It isn't as advanced as some 3D face recognition systems such as Apple's Face ID system, and it won't work with sunglasses or in low light, but it was good enough to be useful in my testing in combination with the under-display fingerprint sensor. Google's new Tensor G3 chip falls slightly behind top rivals from Qualcomm and Apple on paper, but handles games, apps and general use just as well as the best. The battery life is about the same as the Pixel 7 Pro, lasting just shy of 37 hours between charges: enough even a heavy day's use, though you'll likely have to charge it nightly, which takes about 85 minutes using a 30W charger. Specifications Screen: 6.7in 120Hz QHD+ OLED (489ppi) Processor: Google Tensor G3 RAM: 12GB of RAM Storage: 128, 256 or 512GB Operating system: Android 14 Camera: 50MP + 48MP ultrawide + 48MP 5x telephoto, 10.5MP selfie Connectivity: 5G, eSIM, wifi 7, UWB, NFC, Bluetooth 5.3 and GNSS Water resistance: IP68 (1.5m for 30 minutes) Dimensions: 162.6 x 76.5 x 8.8mm Weight: 213g

Android 14 with seven years of updates One of the most important upgrades for the Pixel this year is significantly longer software support. The phone ships with the latest Android 14 and a promise of seven years of both Android and security updates, meaning the 8 Pro will be safe to use until at least October 2030. That brings Google up to par with Apple's iPhone and bests other mainstream Android makers by at least two years. Only Fairphone offers more with 10 years of support. It is a big deal, boosting the useful life of the phone and likely its resale value for the second or third-hand market, which will hopefully keep it in use longer; better for the wallet and the planet. Hopefully it will prompt other mainstream manufacturers to catch up. Generative AI everywhere Google has joined the much-hyped generative AI bandwagon, adding it to various bits of the phone now and promising more to come, including adding its Bard AI to Assistant. Several of the features are US-only for now, including Assistant's ability to summarise websites and articles. Others include an interesting wallpaper generator and the ability to read articles to you. Assistant is also now much better at understanding the rhythms of natural speech, handling your 'umms' and 'errs' so you don't have to rush queries.

Voice typing now automatically puts in appropriate punctuation when you pause, which is a significant improvement. Google Photos infused with more AI More generative AI technology has also been added to Google Photos. The firm's "Magic Eraser" has been upgraded to the full "Magic Editor". You can select people and objects to move or resize them, replace the sky or recast the light, using AI to regenerate bits of the image so that it all blends together. It produces four options at a time for you to pick the best, or hit the regenerate button for more. It is a beta feature that can take up to 30 seconds to work, but when it gets it right it can be magical. Best Take is another new feature for the Pixel that is designed to produce a group shot of people where everyone is looking their best, combining faces from multiple images into one "best" photo. It will work with most group shots already in Google Photos, not just new ones taken by the 8 Pro. For anyone who's attempted to shoot photos of multiple children with them all looking at the camera at the same time, Best Take is the solution. Finally, the new Audio Magic Eraser feature can analyse your videos and break down sounds into different channels, allowing you to reduce their volume independently, such as road noise in a street scene or a flight overhead. It's not always perfect but does pretty well with essentially no user effort. Google also promises more generative AI features to come in updates, including tech to enlarge and sharpen existing images using AI and a night sight low-light mode for video for the first time, using a combination of on-device AI and Google's servers to process the footage. Camera Google's Pixels have long had some of the very best cameras on the market and the 8 Pro is no exception. The underlying hardware has been upgraded across the board with bigger, brighter sensors over the phone's predecessors, which improves low-light shots and reduces blur in fast-moving scenes. The ultrawide camera is the most improved, but the main camera produces excellent shots as does the 5x optical zoom telephoto camera. As with the Pixel 7 Pro last year, the camera offers an additional 2x optical zoom on the main camera and 10x on the telephoto by using only the centre pixels of the sensor, which works very well as long as the light is good enough. There are plenty of fun and automatic features to play with, but the 8 Pro also gets full manual controls for the first time, allowing you to shoot full 50MP images in RAW format (or digital negatives), adjust shutter speed, ISO and focus, which will please keen photographers. Overall, the 8 Pro does a better job than any other phone camera at producing great images with the minimum of effort in trickier situations, such as fast-moving people or dim light, making it a fantastic point-and-shoot camera. 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 £116 and £56 for batteries. The Pixel 8 Pro is made with at least 18% recycled materials, including recycled 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 Pro costs from £999 (€1,099/\$999/A\$1,699). For comparison, the Pixel 8 costs £699, the Samsung Galaxy S23 Ultra costs £1,249, the Apple iPhone 15 Pro Max costs £1,199 and the Fairphone 5 costs £649. Verdict The Pixel 8 Pro might not be quite the high-end bargain of its predecessors, but it still offers more bang for your buck than rivals. The screen, body, performance and battery life are all good. The Pixel has a distinctive look that elevates it from the many of the competition, too. It has a really great camera system, with an array of advanced AI-infused editing tools that blur the line between what's real and what's fake. Used in a responsible fashion, they can be super fun and useful. The phone also ships with the promise of more Google generative AI tech to come in the near future, which is a general theme of Google's hardware: good now, with the potential for constant improvements in feature updates. But the biggest upgrade is in the full seven years of software support, bringing the Pixel up to par with Apple and outlasting all but the Fairphone 5 on the Android side. A very good step in the right direction for sustainability. Pros: seven years of software updates, great camera with 5 and 10x optical zoom, great screen, decent battery life, recycled aluminium, impressive local and generative AI features, undercuts rivals on price. Cons: bump in price, face unlock option not as secure as Face ID, battery life and raw performance short of best-in-class, temperature sensor is a gimmick for now.