

New OnePlus models take the flagship phone game up a notch

March 31 2021, by Jim Rossman



There isn't much in the tech world that makes me happier than a day when we get new flagship phones.

It doesn't matter which company they come from—Apple, Google, Samsung or OnePlus, the subject of today's review—they all make me

smile.

These companies are competing for your smartphone dollars, and the competition makes them all better.

On Tuesday, OnePlus introduced two flagship phones, the OnePlus 9 Pro 5G and the OnePlus 9 5G. It also introduced the OnePlus Watch.

Of the companies I listed, OnePlus is likely the one you've heard mentioned least, but it's trying hard to get its name recognized by releasing phones with all the bells and whistles for a price that's a bit lower than the competition's.

Back in 2014, OnePlus introduced the OnePlus One, which was only available by invitation. This created a bit of buzz from the Android community, and it did increase the demand for the new [phone](#). The OnePlus One had a price of \$299 and was touted as a flagship killer.

As OnePlus phones evolved, the prices have increased along with the features, which isn't a bad thing.

OnePlus 9 Pro 5G

Like Apple, OnePlus uses the "Pro" designation for its higher-end phones.

The 9 Pro features a 6.7-inch AMOLED screen that curves down on the sides. It has a resolution of 3,216 by 1,440 pixels. The screen has a 120-hertz refresh rate that changes dynamically depending on need. This means the screen refreshes up to 120 times per second, but only if the current task requires it. If your phone is sitting on your desk open to the home screen, the refresh rate slows down to save [battery power](#). The front and back of the phone are made of Gorilla Glass 5.

The 9 Pro runs Android 11 with Oxygen OS on top (Oxygen is OnePlus' Android customization).

The processor is the very speedy Qualcomm Snapdragon 888 with 5G, and it runs an Adreno 660 graphics processor.

The 9 Pro comes in two configurations: 8 gigabytes of RAM and 128 GB of storage or 12 GB of RAM and 256 GB of storage.

The 4,500 milliamp-hour battery charges very quickly. The 9 Pro actually has two 2,250 mAh batteries that charge at the same time.

OnePlus says the phone can go from an empty battery to a full charge in 29 minutes with the included Warp charger and from empty to full in 45 minutes using the OnePlus fast wireless charger.

These are the fastest recharge times I've seen on a smartphone. Apple's iPhone 12 Pro charges from empty to 50% in 30 minutes.

The 9 Pro is ready to use sub-6 or mmWave 5G, and it will work with any carrier.

It has Wi-Fi 6 and Bluetooth 5.2.

It has an in-display fingerprint sensor that worked quickly. The charge/sync port is USB-3.1, and there is no headphone jack.

The 9 Pro is IP68 dust- and water-resistant.

Cameras

In the 9 Pro introduction, OnePlus led off by announcing a new three-year partnership with camera manufacturer Hasselblad, which helped

develop the cameras in the 9 and 9 Pro.

The first thing you'll notice as you look around the phone is the large camera bump with the Hasselblad name in silver.

The 9 Pro has four cameras on the back and one on the front.

The rear cameras include a 48-megapixel main camera ([wide angle](#)), a 50-megapixel ultrawide, an 8-megapixel telephoto (3.3x) and a 2-megapixel monochrome depth camera.

You can capture 8K video at 30 frames per second and 4K video at up to 120 frames per second, which creates stunning slow-motion clips.

The selfie camera has a 16-megapixel sensor with a wide-angle lens.

The camera app has a Pro mode that lets the shooter change the ISO, white balance, shutter speed, exposure compensation and switch to manual focus. The Pro mode only works with the main wide-angle camera.

The ultrawide camera has a new feature called a Freeform Lens that removes distortion from your wide shots as you shoot.

The Hasselblad collaboration is said to bring industry-leading color performance with natural color calibration. The 9 Pro takes some really nice photos. I have no doubt the 9 and 9 Pro can compete with any smartphone camera.

OnePlus 9 5G

If you'd like a slightly less expensive option, the OnePlus 9 5G shares many of the important features of the 9 Pro for a few hundred dollars

less.

They share the same Snapdragon 888 processor.

You get the same screen refresh rate but on a flat 6.55-inch OLED display with a lower resolution of 2,400 by 1,080 pixels.

It has the same RAM and storage configurations as the 9 Pro, along with the same Wi-Fi and Bluetooth.

It also shares the same 4,500 mAh battery and the sweet fast charging from the USB-C port, but wireless charging is not as fast.

The 9 has the same wide and ultrawide cameras, along with the depth camera, but no telephoto.

The selfie [camera](#) is the same, as is the ability to shoot 8K videos.

But wait, there's more

OnePlus also introduced its first smartwatch, the OnePlus Watch, which is designed to be teamed with a OnePlus smartphone but will work with any Android phone.

The watch has a 46mm round case and screen with a water resistance that will let you swim with it on.

The watch has integrated GPS and a blood oxygen monitor and heart rate monitor.

Most impressively, it has a 402 mAh battery that OnePlus says will last for a week of active use and two weeks of standard use before it needs a charge. I haven't received one yet to try, but I'll write a review when I do.

Pricing and availability

The OnePlus 9 5G and 9 Pro 5G will go on sale April 2 with preorders starting March 26 at oneplus.com.

The 9 Pro costs \$969 for the 8/128 GB model and \$1,069 for the 12/256 GB model.

Colors for the 9 Pro include Morning Mist and Pine Green.

The OnePlus 9 is priced at \$729 for the 8/128 model and \$829 for the 12/256 model.

Colors are Astral Black and Winter Mist.

On launch day, you'll be also able to pick one up from T-Mobile, Amazon and Best Buy.

The OnePlus watch will cost \$159, and it will be available on April 14 at OnePlus.com.

Conclusions

OnePlus has a loyal following, but it is nowhere near the size of the following of Samsung and Apple.

OnePlus won't be overtaking them any time soon, but it keeps coming out with great phones. The 9 Pro 5G has all the features I look for in a phone. It is fast and has a great screen, super-fast charging, tons of RAM and storage and high-quality cameras.

The 9 5G is also good and worth your time, especially if you want to

save some money.

OnePlus 9 Pro 5G

Pros: Fast, great screen, Hasselblad cameras, fastest battery charge I've seen.

Cons: No memory card slot.

Bottom line: This is OnePlus' best phone yet.

OnePlus 9 5G

Pros: Fast, good cameras, fast wired charging, lower price

Cons: Screen is lower resolution, slower wireless charging.

Bottom line: Lesser features than the 9 Pro but by design.

More information: www.oneplus.com/nl/9-pro

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