

LG Velvet review: The smartphone is sexy, the tech is cool, the camera could be improved

3 August 2020, by Dalvin Brown, Usa Today



LG's latest Velvet smartphone has rolled out in the U.S. as the Korean tech giant adopts a new design language and device naming scheme. The phone comes loaded with stylish hardware and sleek fingerprint-reading technology.

But could the new flagship [phone](#) convert an Apple addict?

I've been #TeamiPhone for 10 years, trapped in the iOS ecosystem and pretty satisfied with every other smartphone release, including the latest iPhone 11 Max Pro. Still, I spent a week testing out the mid-range LG Velvet, and it had me captivated almost as soon as I unboxed it.

LG says the phone is meant to "usher in an era of elegance." Here are some of my main takeaways:

Design

The LG Velvet represents a departure from the company's old G-series names like LG G8, and it also takes on a whole new exterior aesthetic.

Earlier this year, LG teased with futuristic renderings of the phone online, showcasing a polished, reinvented device with a new [camera](#) layout.

Visually, the silver version of the Velvet lives up to the hype. The pearlescent back, narrow build and easy-grip had me at "hello".

On the front, a large 6.8-inch curved OLED touchscreen dominates. The curved glass has a "3-D arc design" with a bezel that's not too distracting. There's also a quirky animation that appears at the bottom of the screen, showing you where to place your thumbprint to unlock it.

Turn the device around, and the mirrored back glimmers with streaks of rainbow depending on how the light hits. It's glossy and fingerprint prone, but still luxe. The camera arrangement was designed to mimic a falling drop of water, LG says. It's a much more minimalist approach than the bulky camera design on my iPhone.

Camera

The LG Velvet has three vertical cameras on the back: a 48-megapixel primary camera, 8-megapixel ultra-wide lens and a 5 mega-pixel camera for depth. However, the photo quality wasn't jaw-dropping.

The snapshots weren't comparable to the dynamic shots taken with my iPhone. For example, black sometimes appeared almost grey. And some of the photos appeared washed out or lacked contrast when compared to those taken with my iPhone.

Selfies were a bit too soft, blown out and matte for my liking. Portrait Mode was a bit aggressive, too. But if I didn't directly compare them to my iPhone photos, the [picture quality](#) was OK.

Apps and functionality

The LG Velvet runs on the Android 10.0 operating system. And for this longtime iOS user, navigating the Google Play Store was relatively easy.

Switching between social networking apps was no problem on the new phone. And most of go-to's, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, functioned the same way they did on my Apple devices. During side-by-side tests, the apps launched at the same speed on both phones. And in some instances, the Velvet launched quicker, but not by much.

One striking difference though was the notifications panel, which is a bit more engaging to interact with on the Android phone.

Setting it up to control my Chromecast was pretty easy, too. The process took under a minute, though I used it only to turn my TV on and off via voice commands.

Final thoughts

My experience was mixed, but I still like the new phone. LG gets 10s across the board for designing a \$599 device that looks and feels premium. The style competes easily with the \$1,000 smartphones I'm more accustomed to.

Because the phone is thin with a unique camera layout, the LG Velvet feels like a smartphone from a year or two in the future, while still maintaining approachable elements, such as a headphone jack. The performance was fine. Apps load almost instantly. Nothing really lagged, and it's 5G compatible.

But the phone isn't perfect. The photo quality has room for improvement. That's one of the main reasons I'll be sticking to my iPhone.

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APA citation: LG Velvet review: The smartphone is sexy, the tech is cool, the camera could be improved (2020, August 3) retrieved 17 October 2021 from <https://techxplore.com/news/2020-08-lg-velvet-smartphone-sexy-tech.html>

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