

Verizon Launches Global BlackBerry

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Verizon BlackBerry 8830

The new Verizon BlackBerry 8830's killer feature is dual CDMA/GSM functionality, which makes it Verizon's first global BlackBerry.

Verizon Wireless announced its first global BlackBerry today, a handheld that will get e-mail and make phone calls in the US and dozens of other countries.

The BlackBerry 8830, which looks like a silver version of the

BlackBerry 8800 , will use Verizon's CDMA EVDO network for high-speed data access here in the US and some other countries, and switch to GSM GPRS in places like western Europe. Typically, Verizon devices don't work in Europe because the continent lacks CDMA networks.

The 8830 is Verizon's first BlackBerry to trade in the old scroll wheel for a new trackball, like the one on the BlackBerry Pearl and the 8800. It's also the first from Verizon to include MP3 and video players - the same ones found on the 8800 - though it doesn't have a camera. Battery life is 25 percent better than the older BlackBerry 8703e's , according to Verizon.

We've seen a lot of the 8830's features before, though not from Verizon, in the BlackBerry 8800. Verizon's most innovative new feature, though, isn't on the device itself. It's in the customer support.

When I've roamed with data-equipped phones before, I've often run into trouble when my plane lands - the phone won't make calls, receive e-mail or whatever. That ends up resulting in long calls to tech support on a pay phone or hotel phone.

Verizon is including a free calling card with every BlackBerry 8830. If something goes wrong or your device is stolen, you can use the card to make a free call to Verizon's 24-hour support line from any land line. That's a great idea and one I hope other carriers will duplicate.

The 8830 will work with new, international BlackBerry data plans, which allow unlimited data in 62 countries for \$64.99 per month with a voice plan, or \$69.99 per month for data-only service. Voice calls in 157 countries will cost between 69 cents a minute and \$2.49 a minute depending on which country you're in. Canada, for instance, will be 69 cents; western Europe will cost \$1.29. The 8800's GSM SIM slot will be locked, so no, you won't be able to stick your own low-cost SIM card in

there.

With its trackball, media players, and new design, the 8830 might even appeal to people who never leave the country, and it will work with Verizon's existing, domestic BlackBerry plans. Within the US, the 8830 will also work as a PC modem on Verizon's EVDO Rev 0 network.

The BlackBerry 8830 will be available through direct channels on May 14 and in retail stores on May 28. It will cost from \$199 to \$399, depending on rebates and credits. Check back soon for our full review.

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