

Lenovo Takes R-Series Wide

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The company's first two Centrino Duo laptops include the first widescreen 14-inch R-Series ThinkPad and an updated small-business notebook.

The Lenovo Thinkpad R-Series is typically regarded as a good "all-purpose" mainstream laptop; without widescreen options it lacks a media-centric feel. Today, the ThinkPad R61 stretches its 14-inch screen to support 1,280-by-800, 1,440-by-900, and 1,680-by-1,050 resolutions. To make things even more interesting, it also adds a set of new Centrino Duo (formerly known as "Santa Rosa") parts, putting performance in the same league as the T-Series. In other news, Lenovo is also updating its small-business laptop, the 3000 N200, to the new Centrino Duo platform.

Those of us who own ThinkPad R-Series laptops were probably not in the position to pay T-Series bucks. The R-series were bulkier laptops and typically not as fast, but you save money on them. The new ThinkPad R61 brings the weight down from 6 pounds to 5.3 pounds, while adding a widescreen.

It's gotten thinner, too, sizing its profile down from 1.4 inches to 1.2 inches. There is a heavier 15.4-inch widescreen option available, for those who prefer the extra screen real estate. The move to widescreen signifies the convergence between the Z-Series and the R-Series; in other words, you'll see the Thinkpad Z-Series tiptoe off the production lines later on this year.

You'll see similar features offered on the R61 and other ThinkPads, including the same docking solutions, fingerprint reader, and a modular optical drive. And for the first time, the R61 will have an option for a webcam and a Blu-ray burner. Card slots, like an ExpressCard 34, Smart Card, Media Card, and PC Card slots, are offered in different combinations, similar to the Lenovo ThinkPad T61 Widescreen.

The 3000 N200 is basically what the R-Series use to be, an affordable small-business solution that doesn't offer as many features and management utilities. Both the R61 and the 3000 N200 will have an assortment of Santa Rosa components. There's a pretty big selection of Intel Core 2 Duo processors to choose from, ranging from the T7100 (1.8GHz) to the T7700 (2.4GHz).

For professionals who do basic tasks like e-mail and Web-surfing, Celeron M processors will also be available on the 3000 N200. Like the T61 Widescreen, you're looking at improved performance numbers over the previous "Napa" chipset, ranging anywhere between 3- and 30-percent gains, depending on the configuration. You also have 802.11n support via Intel's Wireless WiFi Link 4965AGN. Graphics options are available in two flavors for the R61. You can opt for integrated graphics for more battery life, or go with nVidia Quadro graphics if 3D tasks are on your to-do list. The N200 will have integrated graphics only. There's no word on pricing, and units are expected to ship within the month.

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