

Tech review: Palm Pre Plus for Verizon has better features than original

February 24 2010, By Victor Godinez



As a Palm Pre owner and Sprint customer, I'm glad to see the phone getting picked up by Verizon Wireless. It's a sign the platform might yet succeed and thrive.

But also as a Palm Pre owner, I'm annoyed to see the better features in the Verizon version. Not outraged or offended -- the upgrades aren't that huge -- but still.

The Palm Pre Plus (\$149 with two-year contract) looks and feels almost identical to the original model.

The biggest visible change is that the button on the front of the Pre is gone, replaced by a touch-sensitive slice of the casing on the Pre Plus.

It gives the Pre Plus a more streamlined look and feel, although the original was already fairly sleek.

A less obvious hardware improvement is a doubling of the Pre's RAM. Unfortunately, that doesn't mean apps open any quicker. Launching the e-mail program still takes a second or two longer than it should, for example.

The additional memory does come in handy if you want to run several apps simultaneously, but most users probably won't ever have more than two or three going at once.

The biggest addition to the Pre Plus is the Mobile Hotspot app.

This program lets you essentially turn the Pre Plus into an instant Wi-Fi hot spot for up to five devices.

It's a painless program to use, although the \$40 a month fee seems a bit steep at first.

However, stand-alone 3G-to-Wi-Fi devices like the MiFi cost \$60 per month, so the fee on the Pre Plus isn't as terrible as it appears.

Otherwise, the Pre Plus is a straightforward port of the original model. Even the webOS [operating system](#) has been ported over almost verbatim. That isn't a bad thing, since webOS is still one of the most intuitive and visually appealing mobile platforms around.

The keyboard -- which many hate but which doesn't bother me -- is still small and rubbery.

The slider mechanism for extending the keyboard might be a bit more solid than on the original Pre.

Honestly, I'm surprised Palm and Verizon didn't cook up more substantive changes.

The Pre is a half-year-old phone now, which is definitely middle-aged in phone years.

It's about time for Palm to be crafting the Pre 2.

In fact, given that AT&T has already said it soon will be launching some webOS phones, you might want to wait a bit longer before making the Verizon plunge, just to see what AT&T gets.

The Pre is a great phone, and the Pre Plus is a bit of extra polish.

But I'm ready to see what Palm can do for a real encore.

[Palm](#) Pre Plus

Pros: The Pre Plus fine tunes the original Pre, and the mobile hot spot app could be a big attraction to road warriors.

Cons: Rather than additional memory, the Pre Plus might have benefited from a faster processor to make programs actually launch faster.

Bottom line: The Pre Plus is a great phone. You might want to wait and see what AT&T does, though.

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