

Verizon's 4G Droid Charge is brilliant, speedy, reliable and expensive

May 27 2011, By Mark W. Smith



No doubt you've seen the commercials telling us we all need to upgrade to 4G smartphones this summer.

But until now, each 4G phone launch has come and gone with barely a whimper. The 4G networks aren't quite there, say the reviews. Or the [battery life](#) just isn't good enough.

But now comes the Droid Charge, Verizon's first [4G phone](#) to carry the Droid moniker - a signal that Verizon is especially proud of this device.

The Charge comes with a hefty \$299.99 price tag with a two-year contract. Most other top smartphones, including the [Apple iPhone](#), have settled at the \$199 price point.

But after more than a week of using the Droid Charge, there's a lot to appreciate in this powerful package.

FASTER THAN ADVERTISED

The Droid Charge has an unusual shape, defined by its almost chin-like point at the bottom. It's a big phone, too, at more than 5 inches tall.

But the plastic build keeps the phone to just more than 5 ounces.

The highlight is the super-sharp and vibrant Super AMOLED Plus 4.3-inch display. It's a screen so clear that you'll struggle to see any pixels on the display.

The Charge also, thankfully, forgoes the trend to shed physical buttons. There are four real buttons on the bottom of the phone's front to load a menu, go to the home screen, back or search.

The Charge speeds along on Verizon's blazingly fast 4G LTE network - the best and fastest 4G network of any of the carriers.

Verizon rates the speed of its 4G network at 5-12 megabits per second, but I was able to consistently get [download speeds](#) above 15 mbps in metro Detroit on the Charge.

Verizon's 4G LTE network covers most of metro Detroit. The carrier said Monday it would launch 4G LTE in Grand Rapids, Flint, Lansing and more of metro Detroit on June 16.

The Charge is also buoyed by its mobile hotspot option, sharing its connection through WiFi with up to 10 devices.

Verizon is letting early buyers test this service for free until June 15. The carrier declined to say Monday how much the service would cost after that.

The phone runs Android 2.2 (Froyo), though, instead of the newer Android 2.3 (Gingerbread) operating system that is available on a select few handsets.

BATTERY TESTS

I tested the battery life of the Charge against two other Samsung devices running the same software on the AT&T and Sprint 4G networks.

Playing a YouTube video continuously till the phone died, the Droid Charge lasted the longest of the three at 282 minutes. The Samsung Infuse 4G on AT&T lasted 209 minutes and the Samsung Epic 4G on Sprint lasted just 161 minutes.

In everyday use, these phones will last much longer.

In my regular use, the Charge lasted easily from the morning until I got home in the evening to plug it back in.

BEAUTY LIES WITHIN

The bottom line: With the Charge's plastic build, it doesn't quite have the feel of a \$300 phone.

But if you're looking for a 4G smartphone, there is no better option out

there than the Droid Charge.

So consider this a safe time to jump on the high-speed 4G train. So long as you can afford the fare.

DROID CHARGE

Carrier: [Verizon](#) Wireless

Price: \$299.99

Size: 5.11-by-2.66-by-0.46 inches

Weight: 5.04 ounces

Screen: 4.3-inch Super [AMOLED](#) Plus

Camera: 8-megapixel rear camera with LED flash; 1.3-megapixel front-facing camera

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