

Review: NEC Terrain is a bit behind the times, on purpose

July 10 2013, by Jim Rossman

Until Apple introduced the iPhone and the touch-screen genre, almost all phones had a physical keyboard. The coolest phones had a full QWERTY keyboard for fast message typing.

But after the iPhone, every manufacturer jumped on the big, [touch-screen](#) bandwagon. Now all phones look pretty much alike.

But a few manufacturers are going retro and introducing models with a [physical keyboard](#), including the BlackBerry Q10. This week we're looking at the NEC Terrain.

The Terrain harkens back to BlackBerry phones from a few years ago, but the keyboard is just one of the features that set the Terrain apart from other smartphones.

If you're thinking Terrain sounds like a model of Jeep and not a phone, you're partially right. The Terrain is a "ruggedized" [smartphone](#).

What does ruggedized mean? In this instance, it means the Terrain is shock-resistant, waterproof and dustproof.

According to the product page on AT&T's website, the Terrain meets or exceeds MIL-STD-810G (U.S. military) standards for ruggedness.

All the ports are covered by doors that have O-rings to keep moisture out. It features Corning Gorilla Glass 2 and a beefy external shell with

two speakers on the front to help you hear callers even in loud environments.

The Terrain uses AT&T's 4G LTE network and has NFC and Bluetooth 4.0 capability. It also can act as a mobile hot spot to connect up to 10 other devices to its data connection.

It ships with 8 gigabytes of storage and has a microSD card slot to add up to 32 gigs of more storage.

The processor is a 1.5 GHz dual-core Qualcomm Snapdragon S4 with 1 gigabyte of RAM. It runs Android 4.0. Its battery provides up to 10 hours of talk time or two weeks of standby.

The display is a smallish 3.1 inches with a resolution of 640 x 480 pixels, or 260 pixels per inch.

Dimensions are 5-by-2.5-by-0.6 inches, and it weighs just over 6 ounces. It feels beefy in your hands.

The cameras are a little skimpy with a rear-facing 5-megapixel sensor that can shoot 720p HD video. The front camera captures 0.3 megapixels.

The Terrain has an FM radio and push-to-talk.

The keyboard is small, and all the keys are bunched together. I found I could type pretty quickly if I watched my thumbs carefully as I pressed each key, but I'm not going to win a fast-typing contest any time soon.

I'm thinking this phone is aimed at people who work outside and are tough on their phones.

There is a ruggedized version of the Samsung Galaxy S4 that I hope to review soon, but it doesn't have the Terrain's keyboard.

If the rugged features appeal to you, or if you're the person who has roughed up every case you've tried, the Terrain is a phone you'll love.

NEC TERRAIN:

-Pros: Ruggedized. Physical keyboard.

-Cons: Not on latest version of Android. Smallish screen.

-Bottom line: The unique mix of features makes the Terrain attractive to its target market.

-On the Web: att.com

-Price: \$100 with 2-year contract

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