

Review: Samsung's Galaxy Note 8 is the phone Note 7 users have been waiting for

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We interrupt the iPhone mania of late to remind you there are other flagship phones on the market, including the much-anticipated Samsung Galaxy Note 8.

There will be plenty of time to review the iPhone when it's actually for sale. But for the past week, I've been using the Note 8, and it is a quite worthy successor to the beloved but ill-fated Galaxy Note 7.

I'm sure you all remember the Note 7 with its battery fire issues. Here's hoping Samsung learned to respect the limitations of the battery in the Note 8.

I remember being very sad when the Samsung PR representative called me to ask for my loaner Note 7 back. He sent a courier (in person) to physically take the phone from my hands and take it back to the company's offices.

Galaxy Note users are a loyal bunch. Many who didn't experience the overheating issues with the Note 7 didn't want to give them up.

Samsung had to send out an update to make the Note 7 nonfunctional to make sure all the recalled Note 7 handsets were out of service.

SIMILARITIES

The Galaxy S8 and S8 Plus have been very popular, and Samsung has upped the ante with the Note 8, which is mostly the same inside but with a few tricks.

The S8 and the Note 8 share the same processor, the octa-core Qualcomm Snapdragon 835, and both offer 64 gigabytes of storage and a microSD card slot to add more storage.

The Note 8 has 6 gigabytes of RAM vs. 4 gigabytes in the S8.

Interestingly, the Note 8 has a 3,300 milliamp hour battery, which is smaller than the 3,500 mAh battery in the S8. I'm not surprised that

Samsung went easy on the power in the Note 8 after the Note 7 overheating issues.

The Note 8 is running Android 7.1.1 (Nougat). It measures 6.4-by-2.9-by-0.34 inches and weighs 6.9 ounces.

The super AMOLED screen measures 6.3 inches with a resolution of 2,960 by 1,440 pixels. Its pixel density is 522 pixels-per-inch. Like the S8, the Note 8's screen curves off on the edges of each side. Samsung calls this the "infinity display," described as a near bezel-less, full-frontal glass, edge-to-edge screen. There are no buttons on the front. The Note 8 and S8 certainly beat Apple to the punch with the screen stretching to fill most of the front of the phone.

DIFFERENCES

The Note 8 has two main 12-megapixel cameras; both have optical image stabilization. The lenses have different focal lengths - one for wide-angle shots and one for close-ups. The lenses work together to form a 2x optical zoom.

The main cameras can also shoot portraits with a blurred background, much like portrait mode on an iPhone 7 Plus.

Samsung calls this Live Focus, which you can adjust on the screen before you shoot the picture. You can also adjust the background blur after you shoot the picture. It's very slick. Subjects have to be at least 4 feet away for the effect to work.

The [wide angle camera](#) has an aperture of f/1.7, which makes very good photos from very little light.

The front-facing camera has an 8-megapixel sensor. The Note 8 can

capture 4K video.

The Note 8's fingerprint sensor is directly to the right of the main cameras. I mentioned this in my S8 review, and I still can't believe Samsung thinks this configuration makes sense, given the likelihood of a user placing his finger on the camera lens by mistake. Google has the best rear fingerprint sensor location - centered and well away from the main camera.

The Note 8 is IP68 dust- and water-resistant and features wireless charging. The phone is synced and charged via USB-C.

The Note 8 has 802.11ac Wi-Fi and Bluetooth 5.0.

S PEN

The heart and soul of the Note series of phones is the S Pen, a stylus that lets the user interact with the phone by drawing directly on the screen.

The pen slips into a slot on the bottom of the Note 8. Press lightly on the pen, and it springs out ready for use.

You can start writing on the screen, even if the screen is locked. One touch will save your note.

If the phone is unlocked when you remove the S Pen, you'll be presented with a circle of round icons with shortcuts to using the pen. You can create a new note, show all notes or make a smart selection of a portion of the screen that you can save or send to someone else.

You can mark up pictures or screen shots, send a live drawing and even use the pen to touch words to hear them translated into dozens of languages.

When you put the S Pen back into its holder, the S Pen menu disappears.

PRICING AND AVAILABILITY

The Note 8 went on sale last week and is available from all the major carriers for around \$950. Just for comparison, the Galaxy S8 is \$750 and the S8 Plus costs \$850.

So should you pick the Note 8 over the S8 or S8 Plus?

Well, the Note 8 has the biggest screen, a two-lens camera and the S Pen.

The screen is only 1/10th of an inch longer than the S8 Plus, and while I think the Note 8's [camera](#) is great, I think the S Pen is the reason people will select the Note 8 over other phones.

If you'd rather take notes with a pen than type with your thumbs, the Note 8 is for you.

And for the record, Samsung beat Apple to having three models of the flagship phone.

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Pros: Huge, beautiful screen, dual cameras, S Pen

Cons: Expensive

Bottom line: All the greatness of the S8, and it has a pen. What's not to love?

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