

Review: Google Pixel 2 XL is almost perfect, but the screen gives me the blues

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The pressure on smartphone manufacturers must be intense.

Every year they are tasked with upping the ante on last year's [phone](#). Sometimes they radically change the design, like Apple did this year with the iPhone X, but other times the upgrade seems more incremental, meaning key features get an upgrade, but the overall look and feel are not entirely new.

Google's Pixel 2 and Pixel 2 XL don't have a radical new design - in fact, they look a lot like the Samsung Galaxy S8 and S8+.

What Google's Pixel 2 and Pixel 2 XL do have going for them are features that can keep up with any phone on the market and the best Android software experience on the planet.

In fact, I received my review Pixel 2 XL from Verizon, and there were absolutely no preinstalled Verizon apps to be found.

Last year's Pixel XL featured a clean, button-free 5.5-inch screen but with some familiar wasted real estate above and below the screen. This year's Pixel 2 XL stretches its 6-inch screen area to within a quarter-inch of the top and bottom edges in front.

To make a comparison, the Pixel 2 XL is basically the same size as the iPhone 8 Plus, but the Pixel 2's screen is half an inch deeper.

The iPhone X's 5.8-inch screen extends out fully to the top and bottom of the phone, but it does have that goofy notch on top of the screen. I guess every phone has to make a few compromises.

SPECS

The Pixel 2 XL measures 6.22 x 3.02 x 0.31 inches and weighs 6.17 ounces. It is IP67 certified dust- and water-resistant. (It can take a dunk in 3 feet of water for up to 30 minutes.)

The 6-inch OLED screen has a resolution of 1,440 x 2,880 pixels with an 18:9 aspect ratio, and it's covered with Corning Gorilla Glass 5. It has an always-on display.

The Pixel 2 XL runs Android 8.0 (Oreo) on a Qualcomm Snapdragon 835 octa-core processor with an Adreno 450 graphics processor.

It ships with 64 or 128 gigabytes of storage and 4 Gb of RAM. There is no storage expansion slot, and the 3,520-milliamp hour battery is not removable.

The fingerprint reader is mounted on phone's back, right where your index finger comes to rest when you hold the phone. This placement is perfect, and if I ruled the world, all other phone manufacturers would put their fingerprint readers in the same spot.

The charge/sync port is USB-C, and it can quick-charge with Power Delivery 2.0. The Pixel 2 and 2 XL do not have wireless charging.

The Pixel 2 XL's main camera has a 12.2-megapixel sensor with a wide-angle f/1.8 lens. The Pixel's camera is top-notch, although it doesn't have a dual-lens system like some other flagship phones. The camera does have optical image stabilization and a dual-LED flash. It can shoot 4K video at 30 frames per second and 720p video at 240 fps.

The selfie camera has an 8-megapixel sensor with an f/2.4 wide-angle lens.

Wireless radios include 802.11ac Wi-Fi and Bluetooth 5.0.

The Pixel 2 XL has stereo speakers but no headphone jack, although a dongle to connect a pair of headphones to the phone's USB-C port is included.

THE SCREEN

A lot has been written about the screen on the Pixel 2 XL.

I'd heard there were some complaints about image burn-in and screen colorations.

I was really surprised to find the screen shifts to a bluish tint when you view it at any angle other than straight-on. The blue cast is not as visible when viewing color photos, but it's very visible when looking at a page with a white background.

Indeed, for a phone that can cost upwards of \$1,000 after taxes, I was really disappointed in the screen.

Side-by-side comparisons with the iPhone 8 Plus and Galaxy Note 8 easily showed the Pixel 2 XL well behind competitors in screen image quality.

PRICING AND AVAILABILITY

The Pixel 2 costs \$649 for 64Gb and \$749 for 128Gb. The Pixel 2 XL costs \$849 for 64Gb and \$949 for 128Gb. It's available locally from Verizon, which has it exclusively. You can find it at Best Buy and other places Verizon phones are sold. You can also buy it unlocked for any carrier if you purchase directly from Google.

CONCLUSIONS

I'm really conflicted about the Pixel 2 XL. I love the design, and I love the features and I love the pure Android experience, but I can't say I'd like to use that screen every day.

Calling up the same websites on the Pixel 2 XL and iPhone 8 Plus make me really appreciate how crisp and clear and true-to-life photos look on Apple's displays.

I think anyone who wants to buy the Pixel 2 and Pixel 2 XL should spend some time with one before they make a decision.

Pros: First-rate features, pure Android goodness

Cons: The screen is a step backwards in image quality.

Bottom line: If the screen doesn't bother you, the Pixel 2 XL is about as good as an Android phone gets.

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