

Sony Ericsson W550i mobile phone

by Dan Leonard published on 8 November 2005

Placed firmly in the musical youth market, the W550i is one of latest edition to the Sony Ericsson Walkman series - a tri-band GSM phone with music/Java/internet and email capability. As with the K750i/D750i, Sony Ericsson has again introduced a cluster of phones with a common theme and brand, using the same internal technology throughout. The good news is that Sony Ericsson get it right and have a selection of solid phones to suit the needs of media hungry consumers.

The two stand-out elements on first glance at the W550i are the speakers and the flip. Tired of clamshell designs, I found the spin refreshing, save that there is no lock at the 90 degree position, as with the W600. Also, it opens upside down. Did the designers consider pinning the top piece the other way around?

The aerial is hidden in the bar/handle is at the top of the unit and this stands the phone out from the others in the range like the K750.

The speakers are prominent on top and side, and this helps send out the "music on the move" message. Sound wise, there is no discernable difference on the inside than the K750. It uses the same sound processor and emits the same 40 tone polyphonic range.

The speakers are good for voice too, perhaps better than playing the world (or night bus) your latest tracks, but some Mega Bass and stereo phones make the best of the MP3s and AAC files, which play back at CD quality. To be fair, it's hard to gauge the quality as all files are pushed to the phone, but the voice recorded files we extracted sounded pretty crisp on the PC.

The similarities internally with other Sony Ericsson devices end with the external design and functionality, which are unique to the W550i and even for the Nokia influenced user, easy to



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pick up.

Turn on the phone and you will be prompted with a phone or music only option - handy for airplanes, hospitals and so forth, as the send/recieve will cease although we bet trying to convince the airhostess won't be as easy.

Expect 510 minutes of talk time and a whopping 400 hours of standby in ideal circumstances.

For those gagging for stats. The phone is light, just 121 grams and despite the interchangeable rear panel.

Aside from the upgradeable firmware and Java application potential, this phone is POP3 ready, enabling email from a third party email address. The WAP service is complemented by a fully compatible HTML browser. Hardware-wise, the camera is 1.3 mega pixel, flash and widescreen. Pics are taken via a unique button, but the phone needs to be closed. There is no optical zoom available on the camera, but the quality is high. The flash is bright enough to get a clear capture in a dark room. Video capture is easy with such a nice screen.

Other onboard amusements include a built in FM radio, complete with Radio Data Support (RDS) feeds, essentially a weather/news ticker over the radio screen, and some nice pre-packed games including Worms Fortress 3D and the classic Gauntlet.

The Sony Ericsson website currently features over 150 downloads for the W550i alone. One touch buttons and a slider hold lock are nice touches, and the phone is Bluetooth enabled.

News of the iTuneMyWalkman crack will no doubt be of interest to some potential punters, but the majority of transfer will be done via the included software. It's simple enough, PC-based and drag and drop, although a simple plug-and-play folder system is always my preference. The main

At a glance

What is it?

More than just a tri-band phone, music, games, email

Good

Handles HTML very well, preloaded with Gauntlet and Worms

Bad

No removable memory. Very close in specification to rest of the range

Verdict

More exciting than the W800i and its non-'Walkman' brother, the D750i

Price Price dependant on contract

Our score

8/10

Your score

?/10

<http://www.pocket-lint.com/review/1269/sony-ericsson-w550i-mobile-phone>

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problem for music fans is the lack of a removable storage card. The W500i is reliant on an average 256MB of onboard memory.

VERDICT

With little in the way of direct competition, save from the other members of the Sony Ericsson Walkman range and the Motorola Rokr (suffering poor sales), the W500i fills a small niche market of music-based handsets distancing themselves from the core functionality of a telephone.

I see the gaming, web and email elements of this phone as important and enticing as the mp3s.

Furthermore, the good use of buttons and the comfortable feeling in-hand when the phone is side-on sets this above the Nokia 6101 and Siemens CX75. Consider the W500i a smaller, Tri-band alternative to the 3G, 2 mega pixel, 470Mb (built in) W900.

It might be branded as a Walkman, but it is also a good all round phone. Entertaining and stylish.