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Dell Inspiron 1501 laptop

Dell goes AMD, but does this laptop still perform?

by Stephen Patrick published on 19 February 2007

For as long as we can remember Dell had a stance that it would never release a computer that didn't have an Intel chip inside. But just as you can now run Windows on a Mac, you'll find that Dell is offering its first AMD chips in the form of the Inspiron 1501 notebook.

It's not just the use of the AMD chip that makes this a bargain machine. Dell has designed this machine specifically for the budget sector, so you won't find too many frills. For instance, the build quality isn't that great. Sure, it gets the job done but there is a definite flex to the chassis when you push it. Ideally, we'd like a bit more robustness in our notebooks.

The same can be said of the keyboard, which is fine for the price but you definitely feel that it's not the most comfortable keyboard ever. We found the keys a little loose and slow to respond. The touchpad mirrors the widescreen aspect ratio of the panel and was accurate but the mouse buttons, while large, felt a little loose in their mountings.

Where this machine starts to excel is in the performance stakes. Powered by an AMD Turion 64 X2 Mobile TL-50 chip, which runs at 1.6GHz, this is a mid-range dual-core offering but as it also supports 64-bit, there is plenty of future proofing to be had. Fitted with 1024MB of DDR2 memory, we found that it ran quickly and with no signs of lag.

Weighing in at 3kg, this isn't exactly an ultraportable laptop but Dell ships it with two battery packs, the smallest of which gives over four hours of battery life, while the larger pack gave us well over six hours. You wouldn't really want to carry both batteries around with you but in theory you can take advantage of all-day mobile computing, if you don't mind carrying the weight.



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The chassis needs to be quite heavy to hold the 15.4-inch Super-TFT panel. The screen is bright enough for watching DVDs or simply getting your work done but with a resolution of 1280 x 800 pixels, it's not the most high-resolution screen you'll find.

Graphics are integrated, so you won't want to use it for anything more than watching DVDs or editing digital images but the screen is pleasingly bright and clear. You won't find too many extras included, Wi-Fi supports 802.11g but the Ethernet is a standard 10/100 Base-T offering. The DVD rewriter supports dual-formats but not dual-layer.

VERDICT

There was a time when you could expect Dell to produce a budget machine that would be the target other manufacturers would have to follow. However, with the notebook market becoming increasingly aggressive it seems that Dell has missed a few tricks with the Inspiron 1501.

Sure, it handles well and the battery life is great but you don't get the feeling you're handling anything special. After all, there are plenty of machines at this price point that offer more in the way of portability and power.

At a glance

What is it?

Budget notebook

Good

Affordable, good battery life

Bad

Not that powerful

Verdict

Dell finally releases an AMD notebook for the discerning bargain hunter but it's not quite the catch we were hoping it would be

Price £475

Our score

7/10

Your score

?/10