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Toshiba Portege R400 tablet PC

Can Tosh bring back the tablet?

by Stephen Patrick published on 17 September 2007

If you've ever spent some time with a Tablet PC then you'll find features you'll like but more often than not, you'll come away thinking that it's just a little too heavy and the battery life doesn't warrant the extra expense over a standard notebook.

Well, Toshiba hasn't addressed a price issue, as at £1775 (inc. VAT) this is the most expensive tablet we've seen in a while but what the company has done is overall the style and power of the machine, turning the R400 into something truly special.

Billed by Toshiba as "the symbol of sophistication", it's easy to see why. The crisp black and white look is definitely more sophisticated than the average machine and weighing in at 1.8kg, it's a machine light enough to carry around with a fair degree of ease.

When it comes to usability, we found it well above average. For instance, we managed to get well over 5 hours from the battery, which is something we're not accustomed to with a tablet.

Also, instead of opting for a low-voltage single core battery, Toshiba has decided to give this machine plenty of power in the form of an Intel 1.2GHz Core Duo U2500, which delivers performance without putting demands on battery life or generating too much heat.

With 2048MB of memory, we weren't surprised to find how quickly this machine ran. However, what is surprising is that it loaded and ran Windows Vista Ultimate edition swiftly.

What's more, as this also comes with the easiest version of Tablet PC software we've used to date, you'll appreciate its inclusion.

However, the real winning solution on the R400 is the 12.1-inch screen, which sits on a pivot so you



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can twist the panel back and write directly on to the digitised screen with the supplied electronic pen.

We've grown accustomed to lightweight notebooks coming with LED backlighting but this is the first tablet we've seen using such a panel. Instead of standard fluorescent tubes and the difference is amazing, as the brightness and image quality is far sharper, with no hint of the haze usually associated with digitised screens.

Perhaps the most appealing aspect of this machine is that it comes with true mobility built-in in the form of a Novatel Wireless 3G/HSDPA adapter.

The software that accompanies it is easy to use and manage and allows you to send and receive emails on the move, as well as allow your IT manager to update your system on the fly. Toshiba bundles a range of tools, including HDD docking technology, to make the most of the R400.

VERDICT

The Toshiba Portege R400 has restored our faith in the Tablet PC format.

Sure, you have to pay for the privilege and while it's not the most corporate of looking machines, it contains enough technology to more than meet the needs of business and pleasure.

At a glance

What is it?

Tablet PC

Good

Great design, amazing screen, powerful

Bad

Not cheap, integrated graphics

Verdict

A super-stylish Tablet PC that is great to use and comes with a truly stunning display, making this a whole new breed of tablet

Price £1175

Our score

8/10

Your score

?/10