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Palm Treo 500v smartphone

Can Palm impress with its latest handset?

by Stuart Miles published on 13 September 2007

Palm has gone all "consumer" with its latest smartphone, but has ditching the touchscreen worked? We get calling to find out.

Although Palm isn't keen to say this, the Treo 500v is clearly a direct competitor to the BlackBerry Curve (8300).

Available in "glacier white" and "charcoal grey" it is virtually identical in handset size, and both models come with a 2 megapixel digital camera, QWERTY keyboard and a large screen that dominates the proceedings.

However it's once you start looking inside that you start to notice the differences.

The 500v runs Windows Mobile 6 and offers 3G connectivity compared to the BlackBerry interface and just GSM on the Curve.

There is also a stronger focus on pre-installed apps such as Google Maps, a mobile eBay offering and Instant Messaging via Microsoft Live.

In use and the interface is easy to use with Vodafone (it's got exclusivity for the first 3 months) having a big say in how the menu system works and reacts.

In fact anyone looking for standard Windows Mobile 6 will probably be disappointed, as the Vodafone skin is quite severe.

As for the QWERTY keyboard, it's considerably better than the Treo 700v, which we found awkward to use, however still comes across best described as spongy. I'm sure you would get used to it over time however.

As for performance, it's all good, with the 3G web



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surfing fast as long as you can get a coverage. Additionally you can also use the device as a modem for your computer meaning you can ditch the 3G card and use this instead.

VERDICT

If you ask Palm, it will say that the Treo 500v is for "the kids" keen to keep in touch with their social networking friends. We disagree. If that is the case the phone doesn't fit at all. It's bulbous design and un-hip colour schemes (you know the white is going to get dirty fast) are unlikely to appeal to the YouTube generation, however as an alternative to the BlackBerry Curve for the Small Business market it fares considerably better.

The 3G connectivity will appeal to the web surfing dudes out there while the keyboard is a plus for getting emails out fast.

Where its biggest problem lies however is that the Treo 500v doesn't break any boundaries against the competition. Whether it's the Motorola Q, the HTC Tytn 2, the new BlackBerry 8310, the Nokia E-Series, the Sony Ericsson P series, the Samsung BlackJack and the many more that I can't care to list here, there isn't anything new and exciting that we haven't seen before.

While everyone is moving towards touchscreen, it's strange to see Palm moving the other way.

The result is a handset that performs well, but mediocre in its offering.

At a glance

What is it?

Entry-level smartphone

Good

3G, QWERTY keyboard, IM apps pre-installed

Bad

Keyboard is spongy, bulbous design

Verdict

The result is a handset that performs well, but mediocre in its offering

Price price dependent on contract

Our score

7/10

Your score

?/10