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Dell Vostro 1700 laptop

One for business?

by Stephen Patrick published on 24 March 2008

Dell's Vostro line is aimed at business users but takes the same standard look as the consumer Inspiron line. However, there are differences, with the build quality being ramped up and, if you're willing to pay for it, extra services.

The Dell Vostro 1700 is a 17-inch machine and being a business machine, the first thing you'll notice about this notebook is the build quality. Dell hasn't cut any corners, offering a body made from magnesium alloy instead of plastic, which is used on the Inspiron 1700 with which it shares the same body design.

The large chassis weighs in at 4.1kg, which means you won't want to carry this machine around for any length of time. We only managed to get 2 hours from the battery, which is fine for using around the house or office, but not for the road. It's not all bad news, as extra size allows for a big and spacious keyboard that we found great to use.

The 17-inch screen comes with a standard TFT display, which is still the preferred panel for business use. The screen has a 1440 x 900-pixel resolution and while the images were bright, they tended to look a little soft and not as crisp as they would on a Super-TFT panel.

Graphics comes in the form of the Nvidia GeForce 8600M GT, which is a great choice for this level of machine. While it's not a gaming GPU, it'll handle mainstream tasks with ease.

The rest of the specification is impressive too for the price. You'll find an Intel Core 2 Duo T7250, which clocks in at 2GHz and with 2048MB of memory, this should deliver great power for the price. The system is rounded out with a 160GB hard drive.

However, The problem we had with our test



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machine was one of power. While the specification certainly offers great value for the price, when it came to running multiple tasks, we found this machine started to run slow, the fan constantly ran and the whole system start to feel sluggish. We'd suggest, if possible, opting for a faster chip as this should help overcome this problem.

When it comes to connections, you'll find the standard offerings with network options consisting of 802.11a/g Wi-Fi and 10/100 Ethernet and VGA -out and S-video for connecting to external monitors and projectors.

Dell used to build all its computers to order but it has recently started to offer set machines from retail stores. This means you can check out the physical quality of the notebook before you buy. It does mean that you won't be able to specify a configuration but we found this Vostro offered a great spec for the price.

VERDICT

The Dell Vostro 1700 is a great choice if you're looking for a budget desktop replacement that you don't need to be too careful with, as the build quality is tough and robust. It lacks true power but a CPU upgrade should solve that, making this the powerhouse it deserves to be.

At a glance

What is it?

Business notebook

Good

Solid build quality, great spec for the price

Bad

Could be sluggish

Verdict

A desktop replacement with a robust and solid finish, with plenty of power that we found wasn't quite powerful enough

Price £590

Our score

7/10

Your score

8/10