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Toshiba Satellite Pro U400 notebook

Decent spec, but can it deliver?

by Stephen Patrick published on 25 August 2008

Toshiba has updated its notebook range of late by adding a more curved design to its machines. However, the Satellite Pro U400, which is aimed at small businesses, has a rather basic feel about it. The black and silver chassis is boxy and plain but the build quality makes it reassuringly tough.

Weighing 2.1kg, this is a semi-portable notebook designed with the corporate user in mind. Measuring 315 x 225 x 40mm, this is a rather bulky but compact machine.

Helping to keep the weight to a minimum is the use of a 13.3-inch Super-TFT panel. It has a native resolution of 1280 x 800 pixels, which is standard for this size of machine. Images look sharp and the overall brightness of the screen is good. Graphics use the integrated Intel GMA X3100 chipset, which is fine for daily tasks but won't allow you to play games.

The use of a smaller screen hasn't detracted from the addition of a near-full sized keyboard. The keys have a tapered finish and while it is not the most robust of keyboards at this price point, we found it comfortable to use.

Battery price was underwhelming as we managed to get less than 3 hours, on average. While this may be fine for using the U400 around the office or the home, it does detract from its all-round usability on the move.

In terms of specification, this machine offers reasonable value for money. Powered by an Intel Core 2 Duo T8100 processor, which runs at 2.1GHz, and backed by 3072MB of memory, this notebook ran smoothly and loaded applications quickly. The addition of a Toshiba 200GB hard drive rounds out the base specification.

The use of Windows Vista Basic Edition is an odd choice for a machine aimed at business users, as



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it lacks security, high-end network and even backup functions.

You'll find the standard 802.11g wireless LAN built-in, while for fixed connections Gigabit Ethernet is fitted as standard. Other features include an integrated webcam that has its own microphone. Toshiba notebooks now support improved face recognition software, which should help clarity when video conferencing. There is a DVD rewriter for backing up files.

For those who want to add an extra layer of security, there is a fingerprint reader nestled between the mouse buttons. Also adding to the security functions of this notebook is the hard drive shock protector. It is mounted with a sensor, so should you drop the notebook, or shake it, the hard drive's heads are immediately docked, so preventing damage to data.

VERDICT

The Toshiba Satellite Pro U400 is an affordable notebook that offers good performance for the price. Battery life is poor and the use of Windows Vista Basic limits its appeal. However, we liked the quality of the keyboard and overall usability of this machine places it well above average.

At a glance

What is it?

Semi-portable notebook

Good

Compact, decent specification, affordable

Bad

Poor battery life, integrated graphics

Verdict

A reasonably priced notebook that delivers on power but not battery life

Price £750

Our score

7/10

Your score

?/10