

Lenovo ThinkPad SL500 notebook

Small business wonder or woe?

by Stephen Patrick published on 3 November 2008

Lenovo's ThinkPad range has always been aimed at the business user, someone who puts in an order and has the company pay for their expensive new piece of kit. So, what happens if you're a sole trader looking for a notebook that can be business machine by day but family PC by night? The ThinkPad SL range is aimed solely at this user, stripping away most of the costly support and corporate image costs but still retaining build quality and design.

Sure, the SL500 still comes in the customary black-suits-all policy of the ThinkPad line but the addition of a high-gloss lid immediately separates it from the rest of the line. Open the lid, which incidentally doesn't have a latch and you'll find the usual high build quality.

A thick, protective bezel around the 15.4-inch screen adds to the rigid design and the overall build quality feels reassuringly sturdy. The screen proved sharp with good contrast but not the brightest panel we've come across, which partly explains the cost of this machine.

This isn't the most powerful machine, as you'll find an Intel Core 2 Duo T5670, which runs at 1.8GHz running things. It's backed by 2GB of RAM, which is fine for daily tasks but if you work with multiple windows open you will find it quickly starting to lag. The 160GB hard drive is also rather mean for the price.

However, where this machine excels is in its usability. The keyboard is a good size and is one of the most comfortable machines we used, at this price. While you can feel it's not quite the same quality as the more expensive ThinkPads, we still found it a pleasure to use.

Weighing 2.9kg, there is a degree of portability about this machine, so we were more than surprised to find a battery life well in excess of 4



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hours from a single charge. If you do need to take this notebook on the move, or simply use it around the house you'll be more than happy with the results.

Lenovo will be rolling all its notebooks out in 2009 with 3G/HSDPA built-in, using an Ericsson chip, and the SL500 is the first proof of this. It works in association with Vodafone and 30 days worth of free airtime is included to tempt you.

The feature list is basic but covers everything you need, so you'll find a DVD rewriter built-in, four USB ports and even an HDMI-out port. Connectivity uses the latest Gigabit Ethernet and 802.11n connections and on the whole we found this a great machine to use.

VERDICT

The Lenovo ThinkPad SL500 manages to deliver both in terms of aim, as well as price. For the asking price, the build quality is excellent and the all-round usability makes it a pleasure to use. Sure, it's not the most powerful notebook around but the keyboard and battery life more than make up for it.

At a glance

What is it?

Business notebook

Good

Fantastic build quality, great price, good battery life

Bad

Lacks power

Verdict

A budget ThinkPad that delivers on build and usability, making this a great choice of the cash-strapped small business

Price £650

Our score

8/10

Your score

?/10