

Dell Inspiron Mini 10 notebook

Does the Mini 10 hit the spot?

by Stephen Patrick published on 27 April 2009

Dell's Inspiron Mini netbook range has done remarkably well, considering its late entry into the market, although neither the Mini 9 or Mini 12 have proved perfect. The Inspiron Mini 10 is an attempt to change this, taking the best features from both models.

As the name suggests, you'll find a 10-inch screen (or 10.1, to be exact), with the now de-facto 1024 x 600 pixel resolution. It's a Super-TFT panel, so it can be highly reflective in direct sunlight, but it also features great colour reproduction and we found it a pleasure for watching movies on.

As with its siblings, the Mini 10 features a glossy design, with attractive curved edges and a thin chassis. It's one of the more portable netbooks on the market, and weighs in at 1.3kg, making it great for those always on the move.

Where the Mini 9 feels slightly cramped, and the Mini 12 just that little too large for a netbook, the 10 is an ideal size. The chassis is wide enough to allow a keyboard that's not compromised in any way, save for half-sized directional keys, and it's one of the best netbook keyboards we've seen.

It's near identical in design to the excellent keyboards found on HP's range of netbooks - including the Compaq Mini 702ea and the Mini-note 2133. You'll find the same large square keys, with the same slight indent in the centre of the keys, helping to minimise typing mistakes. Stretching right to the edge of the chassis, all of the keys are of a good size, and it's easy to type at speed for long periods of time.

As with the HP machines, the Dell also features a very shallow touchpad, but you won't find mouse buttons fitted on either side. Instead, Dell has integrated them into the touchpad itself. It's not ideal, but it's a reasonable compromise, and



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helps to keep the chassis as compact as possible.

The battery sits slightly higher than the top of the chassis, with a slight indentation below the display to accommodate it when the lid is closed. Unfortunately it's only a 3-cell unit - rather than the 6-cell batteries found in some of the Dell's rivals, giving the Mini 10 a battery life of around 3 hours.

Performance is slightly below that of some of the Mini 10's rivals, due to the use of an Intel Atom Z520 processor. It's the same chip found in Sony's P-series ultra-portable, running at a relatively slow 1.33GHz. That said, it runs the Windows XP OS smoothly, and it's still capable of running the usual netbook tasks.

Those needing more power will be able to opt for the Z530 chip, for an additional £30. Both models come with 1GB of RAM. The additional £30 also gets you a larger hard drive, at 160GB, vs. 120GB.

The biggest surprise when it comes to ports is the inclusion of an HDMI port rather than the more standard VGA-out. It means you'll be able to output HD content to an external display - although the Atom processor and integrated GPU struggles to handle this convincingly, so we're not sure it's really a benefit. Aside from this, you'll find three USB ports and a memory card reader. There's also an Ethernet port.

VERDICT

Overall, the Dell Inspiron Mini 10 is a fantastic package. The keyboard helps to make it one of the most comfortable and practical netbooks available and, unlike rival products from HP, it doesn't cost the earth. Performance may not be earth shattering, but it was never likely to be, and isn't a great deal worse than other netbooks. Overall, the excellent usability on offer and the impressive machine makes this an appealing choice.

At a glance

What is it?

10.1-inch netbook

Good

Size, outstanding keyboard, great all-round package

Bad

Very little, no VGA-port

Verdict

A fantastic keyboard, good quality and a sensible design make this an appealing package. Battery life isn't overly great, however

Price £299

Our score

8/10

Your score

9/10

<http://www.pocket-lint.com/review/4001/dell-inspiron-mini-10-review>

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