

iPhone 11 Pro and 11 Pro Max review: The iPhone for camera and battery lovers

Apple's iPhone 11 Pro models offer just a little bit extra, but some of those features matter a lot to extreme mobile users and pixel experts.

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The iPhone 11 Pro Max (left) and the iPhone 11 Pro.
Sarah Tew/CNET

If the iPhone 11 Pro and Pro Max are out of your price range, check out the [iPhone 11 review](#). It starts at only \$700 and has many of the same features as the iPhone 11 Pro and Pro Max.

[Apple](#) never put the "Pro" label on an [iPhone](#) the way it does with [MacBooks](#) and [iPads](#). But that all changed this year. For Apple's other products, Pro often means better processors and bigger displays. The iPhone 11 Pro has the same processor as the [iPhone 11](#), but its display is better. Apple touts the [Pro phones' impressive photo and video chops](#), but many of those features are also available on the iPhone 11. The only functional benefit is that third camera on the iPhone Pro, which is part of the intimidating three-camera array on the back of the iPhone 11 Pro phones. The iPhone 11 doesn't have a third telephoto camera like the Pro does.

The best iPhone this year is the iPhone 11 Pro, but it's mostly because it has a full package of slightly better antennas, a better battery, a higher-quality OLED display, that added telephoto camera and an 18-watt charger in the box. (That charger should have been included with the iPhone 11 too.) But in most instances, except for that camera, I'm not sure

I'd need it. I felt the same way last year when I compared the iPhone XR with the iPhone XS.

After trying both Pro phones for a week, here are my thoughts.



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What price and size?

Going with the 5.8- or 6.5-inch 11 Pro is just about picking screen size, with the larger Max model also having more pixels, for anyone who needs the phone as a good monitor for photos and video. The larger Pro Max should get roughly an extra hour of battery, too, but stay tuned for battery tests. Going larger costs an extra \$100. I prefer the 5.8-inch one for its pocket size and easier one-hand use, but phablets have their fans.

Apple once again started with a 64GB entry level that costs \$999 or \$1,099 for the Pro Max (see chart

below for UK and Australian pricing). That's way too little storage for most pro users if you're imagining this as a 4K video camera. Then you jump to 256GB for \$1,149 or \$1,249, which is the likely choice for anyone who shoots much video. The 512GB, \$1,349 or \$1,449 tier is strictly for someone who's using this thing to shoot 4K films for a living.

This year's colors? They're all industrial metal shades. I like the midnight green's green-gray look, but I'm a space gray guy normally. The matte glass back is an improvement from the over-glossy back on the standard iPhone 11, aesthetically. But it still slides off inclines too easily. Most of you will also put a case on a device you're spending this much money on.



The telephoto camera makes a difference

You can read all about the ultrawide camera and other iPhone 11 series advantages in my full [iPhone 11 review](#). The same principles apply here. I use the 2x optical zoom telephoto a lot, just like I did for all those years it was on the [iPhone 7 Plus](#) and 8 Plus and [iPhone X](#) and iPhone XS. It helps to get a bit of optical zoom because it results in higher-quality shots than digital zoom.

The telephoto camera has added Night Mode and the same video quality benefits as the wide camera. Both can be used interchangeably. The ultrawide camera has its own unique qualities, though it lacks Night Mode's amazing low-light effects, but the three cameras offer more options.

The Pro phones have two types of Portrait mode this year: There's the original zoomed-in type and a pulled-back wide type like the iPhone XR offered last year.

Yes, other phone cameras are amazing -- we've been wowed by the cameras on the [Samsung](#)

Galaxy Note 10, Google Pixel 3 and Huawei P30. But Apple's new iPhones sport cameras I'd love to use every day. More in-depth comparisons will come in further coverage from CNET in the weeks and months ahead.



More battery life, yes please

The iPhone XS and XS Max lagged on battery life last year, while the iPhone XR stood out. This year, the iPhone 11 Pro phones are leaps ahead, and Apple claims to have added an extra 4 to 5 hours' battery life. They feel better so far: I've found that the iPhone 11 Pro phones are definitely lasting longer on a charge, which could be one of the key reasons to

go for them. And if you want or need maximum battery life, then that's one of the main reasons to opt for the iPhone 11 Pro Max.

3D Touch is gone (long live Haptic Touch)

Apple's funky pressure-sensitive display tech, 3D Touch, debuted back on the iPhone 6S. But now it's been completely removed from the new iPhones.

In its place is what Apple had on the iPhone XR last year: "Haptic Touch." This feature uses subtle taps that kick in when you hold a finger on the display, making it seem sort of like you pressed down. And iOS 13, this year's iPhone OS that comes installed on iPhone 11, has replaced the pop-up app menus that used to work when you pressed into the screen. Those peek and pop-up moves seem to take a bit longer now. I miss 3D Touch, but I didn't need it -- and Apple never figured out how to evolve iOS to make the most of it.

The two reasons to opt for iPhone 11 Pro Max

This year's most expensive iPhone is the \$1,449 iPhone Pro Max with 512GB of storage. Even with 256GB of storage -- the minimum you'll likely want for a high-end phone like this -- it will set you back \$1249. There are two main reasons to go for this year's most extreme iPhone: Either you want that larger OLED display (2,688x1,242 versus 2,436x1,125 for the Pro) or you want that extra hour of battery life.

I wouldn't want to spend this much. But if you really are using your phone as a professional camera and you want to see every pixel, you want the best viewfinder and editing display you can get. And, well, this would be that phone. It's also more fun for movies and games, but at these prices, I'd just buy a separate iPad for that.

My favorite this year might be the smaller Pro

I've gravitated to the 5.8-inch size of the iPhone XS, because its compactness and camera quality made

