



## Acer Aspire 5: Intel's Ice Lake CPUs come to the budget Aspire line

The latest of Acer's budget-minded Aspire 5 laptops is here, now with Ice Lake on board.

BY BEN PATTERSON

**A**nother winner in a long line of budget-priced workhorses, the latest version of the Acer Aspire 5 graduates to Intel's Ice Lake CPU and packs in enough power to tackle daily computing tasks with ease. This new Aspire 5 model does come saddled with a few compromises, including a cramped storage drive and so-so battery life, but

its solid multi-core performance and impressive array of ports make up for those shortcomings, particularly once you consider its affordable price (currently \$550 on Amazon [[go.pcworld.com/asp5](https://go.pcworld.com/asp5)]).

### CONFIGURATION

Last year, we saw versions of the Aspire 5 in various dual- and quad-core configurations of



**They're big and a little heavy, but Acer's Aspire 5 laptops look pretty sleek.**

Intel's Core Whiskey Lake CPUs and AMD Ryzen 3000 series chips. Now, in the second half of 2020, the Aspire 5 is moving to 10th-generation Intel processors and AMD Ryzen Series 4000 CPUs, with configurations ranging from quad-core (Intel) all the way to octo-core (AMD). Sticker prices for the Aspire 5 line remain decidedly wallet-friendly, ranging from \$400 from a dual-core Intel Core i3-1005G1 model to \$850 for a quad-core i7-10510U system with discrete Nvidia GeForce MX250 graphics.

Here are the details for our \$550 configuration (A515-55-56VK) of the Acer Aspire 5:

**CPU:** Intel Core i5-1035G1 (Ice Lake) quad-core CPU

**Memory:** 8GB DDR4

**Graphics:** Integrated Intel UHD

**Storage:** 256GB SSD

**Display:** 15.6-inch FHD (1920x1080) IPS non-touch

**Webcam:** 720p

**Connectivity:** One SuperSpeed 5Gbps USB Type-C port, two SuperSpeed 5Gbps USB Type-A ports, one USB 2.0 port, HDMI, ethernet, combo audio jack

**Networking:** Wi-Fi 6 (802.11ax), gigabit ethernet, Bluetooth 5.0

**Biometrics:** Fingerprint reader

**Battery capacity:** 48Wh

**Dimensions:** 14.3 x 9.9 x 0.71 inches

**Weight:** 3.75 pounds (measured), 4.25 lbs (with power brick)

There's a lot to like here given the price tag, but let's start with the weak points. For starters (and just like all of its siblings), the thin and sleek-looking Aspire 5 is relatively bulky—it does have a 15.6-inch screen, after all. It'll feel heavy in a knapsack. The 48Wh battery is

a tad smallish for a laptop this size, and while the 8GB of RAM is adequate in terms of multitasking performance, 16GB would have been better.

On the plus side, the Aspire's midrange Ice Lake CPU should cruise through everyday computing tasks and even pack in some solid horsepower for multi-core duties like video processing (we'll detail the system's real-world performance in a bit). This particular CPU sits in the middle of Intel's Ice Lake line, so don't expect the blistering performance we've seen from pricier laptops with more powerful Ice Lake CPUs. Also, keep in mind that the Aspire's Ice Lake processor has Intel's mainstream UHD graphics core, not the turbo-charged Iris Plus GPU in higher-end Ice Lake chips.

Besides the Aspire's 10th-gen processor, you also get a generous helping of connectivity options, including a USB-C port for speedy external storage, three legacy USB Type-A ports (two of which boast SuperSpeed 5Gbps throughput), and an ethernet port for wired internet. The only thing we missed was a media card reader. What really caught my eye, though, was the Aspire's support for cutting-edge Wi-Fi 6 routers, a pleasant surprise for this price range.

## DESIGN

The Acer Aspire 5's overall design hasn't changed since last year, and that's a good thing. With its 15.6-inch display, the Aspire 5 demands a relatively large chassis. Unlike the

incredibly light but far pricier LG Gram, the laptop feels just as heavy as it looks. Still, the Aspire 5's tapered shell and its sleek, sandblasted aluminum lid give the system a premium feel that belies its budget price tag.

The Aspire 5 comes in two colors: charcoal black and pure silver. Our review model had a pure silver shell, which extends all the way to the keyboard, the palm rest, and the handsome display hinge with the etched-in Aspire logo. Besides its aesthetics, the Aspire 5 also comes with a removable bottom panel in case you want to upgrade its 256GB storage drive—and yes, brackets are included.

## DISPLAY

The Acer Aspire 5's full-HD display looks, as expected, sharp and vivid, although as with other laptops in this budget-minded series, the Aspire's screen is a little dimmer (in the 259–269 nit range, according to Acer) than those on pricier systems. That's not to say you'll be squinting when viewing the Aspire 5's display indoors; on the contrary, the screen was comfortably bright when I was using it indoors. In direct sunlight, however, the Aspire's anti-glare display can be tricky to see, even with the brightness cranked all the way up.

Thanks to its IPS (in-plane switching) panel, the Aspire 5's screen boasts very good off-angle viewing, with screen brightness dimming just a tad when viewed from the sides, above or below.



**The Aspire 5's 15.6-inch IPS display boasts solid viewing angles, but it's not touch sensitive.**

It's worth noting that the Aspire 5's display is not touch-enabled, which isn't too surprising given the Aspire's budget price, as well as the fact that it's a standard laptop rather than a 2-in-1.

## **KEYBOARD, TRACKPAD, SPEAKERS, AND WEBCAM**

As with the other models that I've tested from this particular series, the Acer Aspire 5's backlit keyboard made for pleasurable typing. The keys themselves offered plenty of travel and a springy, satisfying rebound. While there are no dedicated media playback keys, you do get a dedicated (albeit somewhat squished) 10-key numeric keypad, along with dedicated hotkeys for

airplane mode, sleep mode (right next to the Escape key, so careful), and a display on/off toggle. The power button in the top right corner of the keyboard only turns off the laptop after it's long-pressed, and even then there's a confirmation

pop-up to ensure you don't shut down the laptop accidentally.

The Aspire 5's responsive touchpad did a solid job during my testing. The cursor did skitter around a bit when I brushed my palm against the bottom-right corner of the trackpad, but not so much on the bottom-left corner. I only recall one or two instances when the cursor jumped unexpectedly while I was typing.

With the help of Acer's TrueHarmony Gen 2 audio technology, the Aspire 5's down-firing stereo drivers sound pretty decent as far as laptop speakers go. Cranking "Live and Let Die" by Paul McCartney and Wings, the Aspire's speakers delivered relatively full, rich audio, with crisp high-end detail, a solid midrange and even a dash of bass. Of course,

“relative” is the key word here; if you really want to sit down and enjoy streaming music on the Aspire 5, you’ll be better off with headphones or a pair of external speakers.

The Aspire 5’s 720p webcam is adequate for video calls, but not much more. During multiple Zoom calls, the Aspire’s webcam captured smooth but blotchy, washed-out looking video images, which is characteristic for a budget laptop. That’s fine for everyday video calls, but if you’re presenting to the CEO, you’ll want to connect a higher-quality webcam.

## PORTS

The Acer Aspire 5 delivers a robust selection of ports for a budget laptop, with one notable exception.

On the left, you get that SuperSpeed 5Gbps USB Type-C port we mentioned earlier, along with a pair of SuperSpeed 5Gbps Type-A ports, a full HDMI port, a drop-jaw RJ45 gigabit ethernet port, and a barrel-shaped power port.

On the right side sits a USB 2.0 port and a combo audio jack, along with a laptop security slot.

As I said before, it’s a treat to see a budget



We’re fans of the Aspire 5’s comfy keyboard, although the dedicated numeric keypad is a bit squished.



The Aspire 5 has ports aplenty—SuperSpeed USB Type-C and Type-A connectors, a gigabit ethernet port, and a full HDMI port.



The right side of the Aspire 5 has a single USB 2.0 port, a combo audio jack, and a laptop security slot. No memory card slot, though.

laptop with not only a SuperSpeed USB-C port for the latest high-speed storage devices (SuperSpeed 10Gbps would have been even better, but that's asking a bit much from a \$550 laptop), but also two SuperSpeed USB Type-A ports, and a USB 2.0 port (good for a mouse or a printer). The wired ethernet port is a nice bonus too.

So, what's missing? A memory card reader, which would've come in handy for quick access to, say, the microSD card in an Android phone.

## GENERAL PERFORMANCE

We put this new Acer Aspire 5 model through its paces with our usual suite of benchmarks, covering both single- and multi-core applications as well as graphical performance and battery life. For the most part, we liked

what we saw, with the Ice Lake-powered Aspire delivering solid numbers when it comes to daily PC tasks and even CPU-intensive activities such as video encoding. Its battery life scores, however, fell a tad short.

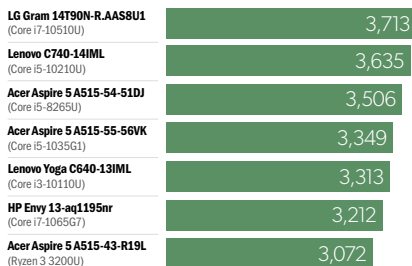
## PCMARK 8 WORK 2.0 CONVENTIONAL

Our first benchmark simulates such everyday computing chores as word processing, spreadsheet work, online shipping and video chat—in other words, the types of tasks that budget laptops like the Acer Aspire 5 are made for. A PCMark 8 score of 2,000 or more generally points to smooth Office performance, and anything above 3,000 is just icing on the cake.

Looking at our chart, our Aspire 5 and its 10th-gen Ice Lake CPU lands smack-dab in the middle, besting a quad-core, Core i7-packed HP

## PCMark 8 Work 2.0 Conventional

Native resolution



LONGER BARS INDICATE BETTER PERFORMANCE

The Acer Aspire 5 sits in the middle of our PCMark 8 chart, but remember that any score over 3,000 is pretty dang good.

Envy but falling slightly below the score of last year's Aspire 5 and its Whiskey Lake processor.

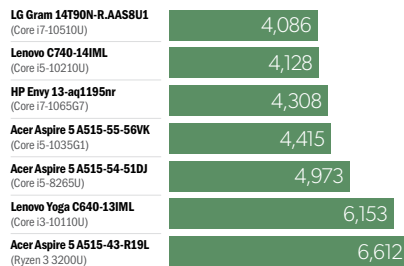
The tiny gap between this year's Aspire 5 and last year's isn't anything to get excited about. Every laptop in our chart notched an excellent PCMark 8 score, including the Lenovo Yoga C640 and 2019's Ryzen 3-powered Aspire 5, both of which have dual-core processors.

## HANDBRAKE

Next up comes a somewhat tougher test than PCMark 8. Our HandBrake benchmark puts a laptop's CPU through its paces as it encodes a 40GB MVK video file into a format suitable for Android tablets. It's a processor-intensive, multi-core task that frequently takes more than an hour to complete. It's an ideal test for seeing how a laptop handles a crushing, heat-

## HandBrake Total Encode Time

Seconds



SHORTER BARS INDICATE BETTER PERFORMANCE

With its midrange Ice Lake CPU, the Acer Aspire 5 manages a solid but not awe-inspiring HandBrake score.

generating CPU load over a lengthy period.

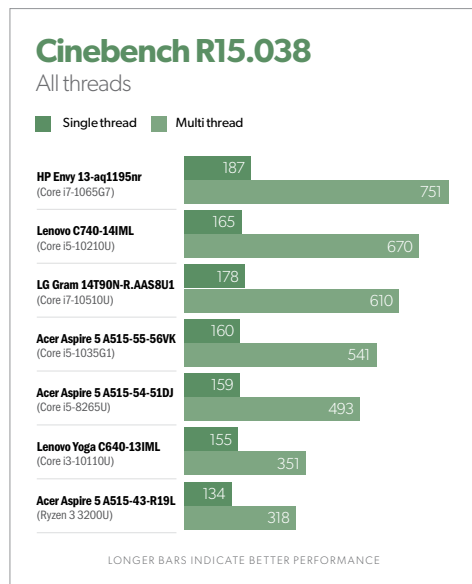
Again, the 2020 Aspire 5 emerges in the middle of the pack, but this time it's well ahead of its Aspire 5 forbear, while the dual-core Lenovo Yoga and Ryzen 3-powered Aspire 5 trail (as expected) well behind. We consider any HandBrake score south of 4,500 (remember, lower numbers are better) to be pretty solid for a midrange, quad-core Intel laptop, which makes the 4,415 result for the budget-priced Aspire 5 look fairly impressive, even rivaling that of the far more expensive HP Envy 13 and its higher-end Core i7 Ice Lake processor.

## CINEBENCH

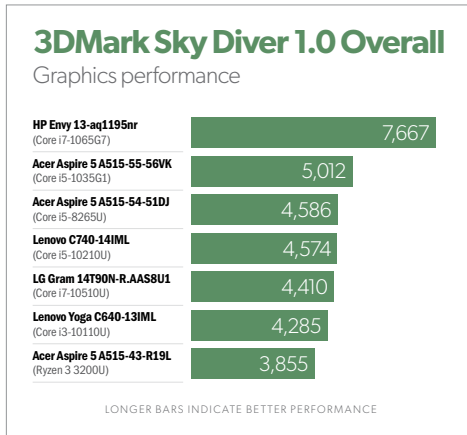
While HandBrake typically takes an hour or more to complete, Cinebench, a test that involves rendering a 3D image in real time, is

generally over in just a few minutes, making it a sprint to HandBrake’s marathon. For Cinebench, laptops with the fastest boost clock tend to have the advantage, in addition to those with the most cores.

Yep, we’re more or less talking a repeat of the HandBrake chart, with the 2020 Aspire 5 again sitting in the middle, ahead of the older Aspire 5’s (both in terms of its all- and single-threaded results) as well as the dual-core Yoga C640, and behind three somewhat more powerful laptops that cost about twice as much. All in all, the new Aspire 5 turns in a respectable performance for its price range.



**As with HandBrake, the Acer Aspire 5’s Cinebench performance isn’t bad give its price, but it falls behind pricier laptops with more powerful Ice Lake CPUs.**



**The Acer Aspire 5 notches a surprisingly good 3DMark Sky Diver score considering its mainstream Intel UHD integrated graphics core.**

## 3DMARK SKY DIVER 1.0

With its integrated Intel UHD graphics core, the latest Acer Aspire 5 isn’t much of a gaming machine, but we’re still curious about its graphical performance—after all, even if it can’t run Crysis, it should still be able to handle some light photo and video editing, or maybe even a little Minecraft. For a real gaming laptop, you’d need a dedicated graphics card, although Intel’s integrated Iris Plus core has been giving entry-level GPUs a run for their money.

Surprisingly, the 2020 Aspire 5 pops to second place in the 3DMark Sky Diver benchmark, beating out laptops that cost hundreds more. Granted, the differential between the Aspire and most of the other systems in our chart isn’t gigantic, but the gap between it and, say, the far pricier LG Gram is well beyond the margin of error. Meanwhile, the HP



Envy 13 and its supercharged Iris Plus integrated GPU sits comfortable at the top of the chart.

## BATTERY LIFE

To test the battery life of a given laptop, we loop a 4K video using the stock Windows Movies & TV app, with the display cranked up to about 250 nits if possible (for the Aspire 5, we dialed up the screen brightness all the way) and the volume set to 50 percent, headphones on.

All three of the Aspire 5 laptops in our roundup have 48 watt-hour batteries, smaller than the other laptops in our chart, so it's understandable that the trio of Acers sit in the bottom half of our chart. Still, it's tough to spin the 2020 Aspire 5's battery drain result as anything but mediocre, with last year's Aspire 5 (albeit with a less demanding Whiskey Lake CPU) squeezing nearly a full 100 minutes more out of essentially the same battery.

In real-world conditions, I found that I could work on the Aspire 5 for most of the morning on

### Acer Aspire 5 A515-55-56VK



#### PROS

- Sleek-looking shell.
- Solid single- and multi-core performance.

#### CONS

- Mediocre battery life.
- Weighs 3.75 pounds, and feels like it.

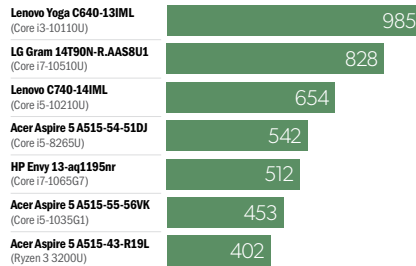
#### BOTTOM LINE

The latest version of the Acer Aspire 5 graduates to Intel's Ice Lake CPU and packs in enough power to tackle daily computing tasks with ease.

**\$549**

## Video rundown test

Minutes




LONGER BARS INDICATE BETTER PERFORMANCE

**The Acer Aspire 5's battery life is on the mediocre side, but luckily its half-pound AC cord won't weight you down.**

battery power, but by around lunchtime I needed to plug in the AC adapter. The good news is that the Aspire's power cord and integrated power brick only weigh about half a pound.

## BOTTOM LINE

We've been consistently impressed by Acer's budget-minded Aspire 5 line, and this new configuration with an Intel Ice Lake CPU doesn't disappoint. While it's a tad heavy (same as other Aspire 5 laptops we've tried) and its battery life isn't the greatest, this new Aspire 5 can crank through everyday computing tasks without skipping a beat, and it holds its own when it comes to video processing, database crunching, and other heavy CPU loads. Yes, you'll need to keep the AC adapter handy, but given the \$550 price tag, we're not complaining too much. 

# Product Test

We test and compare the latest products

## Honor MagicBook Pro

We test two new £850 laptops to find out which one offers the best value for money



**H**onor, a subsidiary brand of Chinese manufacturer Huawei, is best known for its smartphones. It's a relative newcomer to laptops, but has created quite a splash with its MagicBook range.

Acer, meanwhile, is a Taiwanese company that's well established as a reliable brand in the laptop market. Its machines are almost as ubiquitous in shops as laptop stalwarts HP and Dell.

Here, we've looked at two similarly priced laptops, one from each company, to see which one offers the best deal.

### Design, build and screen

The MagicBook Pro is Honor's flagship model, just launched and available for £849 direct from Honor. There's only one configuration, unlike the Acer's Swift 3, which is available in a range of specifications. The Swift laptop we tested cost

a similar 512GB SSD.

Honor has supplied its laptop with a 16in screen – compared to the Acer's 14in display – so the overall size of the device is larger. However, both screens have resolutions of 1,920 x 1,080 pixels, which means the Acer's looks sharper, because the density of the pixels is higher.

screen, the Acer package is even more compact, measuring 15.9mm at its thickest point and weighing just 1.19kg. Both are well suited to being carried around, though the Acer will slip into a smaller bag.

Both chassis are made of strong metal but the Honor's is robust, unyielding and feels very well made. The Acer is reasonably sturdy but we thought the lid and wrist rest could take a little more reinforcement.

The Honor has plenty of ports for attaching peripherals, with USB-C, HDMI and a standard USB port on the left edge; and two standard USB ports plus a 3.5mm headphone socket on the right edge. The Acer doesn't quite keep up, though its smaller frame only loses a single USB port on the right.

### Performance

We put both laptops through a barrage of performance tests. The Honor laptop flew through our 4K media benchmark, producing a score of 221. This is a phenomenal

### PRODUCT INFO

#### Honor MagicBook Pro

Price: £849

Buy from Honor:  
[bit.ly/2Hr7741](https://bit.ly/2Hr7741)

### SPECIFICATIONS

- AMD Ryzen 5 4600H processor
- 16GB of memory
- 512GB SSD storage
- 16.1in 1,920 x 1,080 IPS display
- 369 x 234 x 16.9mm
- 1.7kg



FEATURES	★★★★★
PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
EASE OF USE	★★★★☆
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★

“ The MagicBook Pro flew through our 4K media and SSD speed tests, outperforming vastly more expensive laptops ”

£849.99 direct from Acer, though you may find it for less elsewhere. However, when shopping around for prices, check the list of specifications to ensure you're not buying a cheaper model with different components.

The headline specs for the Honor laptop are an AMD Ryzen 5 4600H processor with 16GB of memory and a 512GB SSD drive. The Acer opts for Intel instead, with a Core i7-1065G7 processor, only 8GB of memory but

Both screens are vivid and bright, though the Honor has the edge with a peak brightness of 345cd/m<sup>2</sup> and an excellent 97.8% of the sRGB colour standard, ahead of the Acer's 291cd/m<sup>2</sup> peak brightness and 93.7% of the sRGB standard.

These laptops fall into the category of ultrabooks – light, thin laptops that are designed to be easily portable. The Honor is a hair's breadth under 17mm thick and weighs a mere 1.7kg. With its smaller



# Huawei MateBook 14 AMD

**Price:** £749 (inc VAT) from [fave.co/3iRX1WS](https://fave.co/3iRX1WS) ★★★★★

**H**uawei's smartphone struggles are well publicized, but the firm's tremendous success in the laptop space sometimes goes unnoticed.

Ever since the first MateBooks arrived with strong specs and an attractive – if familiar – aesthetic, Huawei has been steadily refining the design and building up a range of laptops that are competitive at almost every price point. So we come to the MateBook 14, which looks much like last year's model but packs in more power, jumps from Intel

to AMD, and improves Huawei Share support. Oh, and in case you were worried: yes, it runs Windows 10 and you can access Google just fine.

## DESIGN

Huawei has stuck to its tried and tested design language with the 2020 MateBook 14, which is basically an attractive, conservative design that still looks faintly like a MacBook.

The chassis is essentially unchanged from the 2019 model, though that's no

bad thing. It means you get a slim, petite machine despite the 14in display, at just 15.9mm thick and a weight of around 1.5kg.

It's not as slender or light as the company's flagship MateBook X or X Pro, but it's also substantially cheaper than either, and packs in more ports too.

It does feel a little heavy though, especially compared to rival devices from Acer and Asus – likely thanks to Huawei's choice of materials.

The bulk of the body is made out of an aluminium alloy (though the hinge and port covers are plastic), and it's finished in a dark Space Grey (though some countries get a lighter Mystic Silver option), for an end result that isn't exactly eye catching, but looks sleek and modern. It's restrained enough to seem professional but slick enough that you'll still want to show it off a bit.

## DISPLAY

Let's talk about the panel. It's a 14in touchscreen IPS display – so no OLED – at a resolution of 2,160x1,440. If that resolution sounds a little odd, it's because this screen is in the 3:2 aspect



The MateBook 14's IPS display is bright and colourful.

ratio, rather than the more familiar 16:9. It's a taller, boxier display that gives you extra vertical real estate – a particular boon for productivity, which is really where the MateBook 14 feels focused.

If you mostly want a laptop to watch Netflix the screen may frustrate, as you'll always have black bars above and below whatever you watch, but if you spend your days on email and Excel – or even more demanding creative or technical software – the extra scrolling space will quickly become your favourite thing about this laptop.

The display itself is bright, with good contrast and colour range, though like Huawei's other laptops it suffers from an especially reflective finish. That means that despite good peak brightness it still struggles in direct sunlight, as there's not much you can do to avoid intense glare.

It helps that with slim bezels the screen almost always looks the part. There's a 90 per cent screen-to-body ratio, with particularly slim borders around the top and sides – though there's a chunkier bottom bezel where the Huawei logo sits.

## KEYBOARD AND TRACKPAD

Huawei's keyboards don't quite reach the lofty highs of the best on the market – that's the Dell XPS 13, for my money – but they've been quietly excellent for some time now, and the MateBook 14 is no exception. The full-size keyboard reaches almost from edge to edge, and looks as sleek and simple as the rest of the design. Key travel is relatively short, but it's comfortable, quiet and satisfyingly tactile.

It also has what's become a Huawei trademark: a hidden webcam. The

company installs its webcam below a fake function key, which pops up when you press on it. A few years ago this felt like a smart way to save space on the display bezels and ensure privacy, hiding away a rarely used feature.

Things have changed, though. For one, other manufacturers have shrunk webcams down to fit above screens without compromising the design; more importantly almost all of us now spend much more time on camera than we used to, and an upwards-facing webcam that gets blocked by your fingers when you type has gone from minor annoyance to genuine grievance.

The trackpad at least is an unmitigated joy, with an expansive surface area and multi-touch support. Huawei has also managed to move the Huawei Share tag underneath the trackpad, which saves you from an

unsightly sticker and feels more streamlined. More on what that actually does down below.



The keyboard includes Huawei trademark: a hidden webcam.

## PORTS AND CONNECTIVITY

Ports are another strong suit. You'll find two USB-A 3.2 ports, one USB-C (used for charging), an HDMI port and a 3.5mm



A fingerprint sensor is embedded in the power button.

headphone/mic jack. It's a shame there's no microSD card slot, but otherwise you're getting just about everything you could hope for in a laptop this size.

As for other connectivity, there's Wi-Fi of course, but no support yet for the new Wi-Fi 6 standard. Bluetooth is also on the slightly older Bluetooth 5.0 standard, but that doesn't matter so much.

A fingerprint sensor is embedded in the power button, and it can scan your print while you turn the machine on – so that theoretically, pushing the button once should both boot the PC and unlock it. This mostly works, though occasionally I did have to rescan my finger to log into Windows.

As is reasonably common in laptops, the speakers are located on the underside of the body. On a desk that's fine, but if you're using the MateBook 14 on your lap or in bed, audio quality noticeably suffers.

## PERFORMANCE

Under the hood is where things get more interesting. In the UK, Huawei is only releasing an AMD-powered version of the 2020 MateBook

14, which is what I've been testing, though elsewhere in Europe you might have an Intel option.

If you're opting for AMD, the choice is between the powerful H-series Ryzen 5 4600H or the Ryzen 7 4800H CPU, while Intel users get to pick between an i5-10210U and an i7-10510U. The AMD CPUs are undeniably stronger performers, but there is a trade-off: if you opt for Intel you'll get an Nvidia GeForce MX350 GPU too, while the AMD options are limited to integrated graphics only.

Either way, RAM is either 8GB or 16GB, though AMD models use DDR4 while the Intel models still use the slower DDR3 standard. Both models

get up to 512GB of SSD storage. I've been reviewing the top-spec UK model, with a Ryzen 7, 16GB of RAM, and 512GB storage. The bottom line is that performance is fantastic, especially considering the price, and the MateBook 14 will comfortably handle most things you throw at it.

### Geekbench 5 (multi-core)

Huawei MateBook 14 AMD: 6,614  
 Huawei MateBook D14: 3,094  
 Huawei MateBook X Pro: 3,568  
 Honor MagicBook Pro: 5,569  
 LG Gram 14: 2,959  
 Dell XPS 13 (2020): 4,772

### PCMark 10

Huawei MateBook 14 AMD: 5,095  
 Huawei MateBook D14: 3,757  
 Huawei MateBook X Pro: 3,823  
 Honor MagicBook Pro: 4,821  
 LG Gram 14: 4,245  
 Dell XPS 13 (2020): 3,934

### Battery Test

Huawei MateBook 14 AMD:  
 10 hours 5 minutes  
 Huawei MateBook D14:  
 10 hours 3 minutes  
 Huawei MateBook X Pro:  
 14 hours 58 minutes  
 Honor MagicBook Pro:  
 12 hours 53 minutes

LG Gram 14: 8 hours 31 minutes  
 Dell XPS 13 (2020): 12 hours 1 minute

### Charge in 30 minutes

Huawei MateBook 14 AMD: 45%  
 Huawei MateBook D14: 43%  
 Huawei MateBook X Pro: 45%  
 Honor MagicBook Pro: 46%  
 LG Gram 14: 19%  
 Dell XPS 13 (2020): 29%

AMD's integrated graphics tech remains surprisingly robust, and so the MateBook even holds its own on the 3DMark graphics benchmark, but the limitations are clear – it was actually outperformed by last year's model, with a Core i7 and MX250, despite comfortably beating that model on the PCMark computing test.

Huawei has also used the AMD processors as an excuse to redesign the MateBook 14's cooling set-up, and with impressive results. Even at full whack it runs quiet and cool, meaning there's not much cause for concern around performance throttling – or around using it on your lap.

Ultimately, if you're looking for a device for graphically intensive tasks – be that gaming, video editing or complex 3D modelling – you should probably look elsewhere. But for just about anything else, you won't find much more power

than this in a laptop, and certainly not in one this compact.

## BATTERY AND CHARGING

The 56Wh battery in the MateBook 14, combined with the power efficiency of the AMD chips, basically makes it an all-day device. I've comfortably used it for a full day's work without stressing about the power cable – though bear in mind that I would expect battery life on the Intel versions to be a little lower.

As for charging, the included 65-watt charger topped the battery back up by 45 per cent in half an hour – so it would probably take an hour or so for a full day's charge. Helpfully it's a compact charger, no larger than most phone ones, and since it's USB-C it will handily also charge most phones, saving you carrying around separate plugs.

Windows 10 and it runs just like any other Windows laptop, with all the same software, security, and access to Google services.

You also get a little extra if you use other Huawei devices, as the company works hard to build up its hardware and software ecosystem, principally through Huawei Share.

As I mentioned above, this tech has now been moved under the trackpad. That means that if you own a compatible Huawei or Honor phone you can now hold it over the trackpad briefly to connect it to the laptop. At that point you can drag and drop files between the two devices, work on phone files from the laptop, and mirror your phone's display to the laptop screen so that you can actually use it like an app within Windows, using your

## SOFTWARE

As I said above, Huawei's laptop line is currently unaffected by the ongoing US trade ban, thanks to a special exemption for Microsoft. That means the MateBook 14 ships with



The MateBook 14 ships with Windows 10



mouse to click and your keyboard to type WhatsApp messages.

It's a convenient touch, but only useful if you already use a Huawei or Honor phone. And since their latest handsets don't support Google software, unfortunately the odds are that you don't.

## VERDICT

Huawei has once again delivered tremendous bang for your buck in the 2020 MateBook 14, especially in the UK's overhauled AMD models.

The H-series Ryzen chips deliver the best performance you can find in a laptop for the time being, and will outpace the silicon in some laptops at double the price. The design is slick, modern and unfussed, bolstered by an excellent display and a good array of ports, and it's fairly thin – if a little heavy for a laptop its size. The only real downsides are that unfortunate webcam placement, the lack of a GPU option in the AMD models, and the fact that its coolest software feature – Huawei Share – is inevitably of limited use since you're probably unlikely to pair it with a new Huawei phone. **Dominic Preston**

## SPECIFICATIONS

- 14in (2,160x1,440; 185ppi) IPS (optional touchscreen)
- Windows 10 Home

- AMD Ryzen 5 4600H or Ryzen 7 4800H
- 8/16GB RAM
- 256/512GB SSD
- Pop-up 1Mp web cam
- USB-A 3.0
- USB-A 2.0
- USB-C x1
- HDMI
- Headphone jack
- Fingerprint power button
- Wi-Fi 802.11a/b/g/n/ac, 2.4/5GHz 2x2 MIMO
- Bluetooth 5.0
- Dual speakers
- Quad microphones
- 57.4Wh non-removable battery
- 65-watt USB-C charger
- 307x223x15.9mm
- 1.49kg.