

Best Phone Cameras

There are lots of great phones on the market, but these are tops for photos and videos

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The phones that perform best in our camera tests take crisp, high-resolution photos with true-to-life color and low image noise. Photo: Getty Images

Many of us rely heavily on a phone camera to capture key moments in our lives, both big and small—from summer vacations and birthday celebrations to this morning’s breakfast. That means we care a good deal about camera quality when looking to invest in a new smartphone.

It can be tricky, though, to decipher camera specs—from resolution to optical zoom range—and accurately predict whether a phone will produce shots worthy of sharing.

To help with that, Consumer Reports tests the camera quality of every smartphone that comes through our labs, dutifully snapping photos and recording video in a studio environment under controlled lighting conditions, and then evaluating the results on a high-quality LCD display. Our expert testers review not only the rear cameras but also the front-facing (selfie) camera. To come out on top, each must take photos and videos with very good color quality, color accuracy, sharpness, and exposure level, as well as low image noise.

If you’d like a little guidance as you shop, the lists below spotlight the smartphones that have aced our tests for the best camera systems, the best rear image quality, and the best rear video quality.

Best Phone Cameras

These phones score tops in our ratings for overall camera quality. As you might expect, the list includes a number of flagship models that sit high in our smartphone ratings.

The Samsung Galaxy S25 Ultra now ranks highest for overall camera performance, followed closely by other high-end devices like Google’s Pixel 9 Pro XL and the iPhone 16 Pro Max. The OnePlus Open is the only model not made by Apple, Samsung, or Google to crack the top 10 for rear image quality.

But keep in mind that just because a phone doesn’t make the cut here doesn’t mean it has poor cameras. Popular models often get edged out by a hair. In our ratings, Apple’s budget

iPhone 16e, for example, falls only three-tenths of a point behind the top-ranked Samsung Galaxy S25 Ultra, and yet it didn’t make this list.

In fact, the differences in score between these high-ranking models are so small they could be chalked up to variations in our test samples, says Henry Parra, who oversees smartphone testing at CR.

The bottom line? The rankings below are useful if camera quality is a top priority, but you can count on any of these models to take great photos and videos for saving and sharing. For a deeper dive into what makes them great, see the model-by-model write-ups at the end of this story.

1. Samsung Galaxy S25 Ultra
2. Google Pixel 9 Pro XL
3. Google Pixel 9 Pro
4. Apple iPhone 16 Pro Max
5. Apple iPhone 16 Pro
6. Google Pixel 9
7. Samsung Galaxy S24 Ultra
8. Apple iPhone 15 Pro Max
9. Samsung Galaxy S25
10. Samsung Galaxy S25+

Best for Rear Image Stills

These models receive the highest scores for image quality based on stills taken with their rear cameras.

1. Samsung Galaxy S25 Ultra
2. Google Pixel 9 Pro XL
3. Google Pixel 9 Pro
4. Apple iPhone 16 Pro Max
5. Samsung Galaxy S24 Ultra
6. Apple iPhone 16 Pro
7. Apple iPhone 15 Pro Max
8. Google Pixel 9
9. Samsung Galaxy S23 Ultra
10. OnePlus Open

Best for Rear Video

These models deliver the highest-quality video via the rear camera system. The list has 11 phones because of tied scores.

1. Samsung Galaxy S25 Ultra
2. Samsung Galaxy S25
3. Samsung Galaxy S25+
4. Apple iPhone 16 Pro
5. Apple iPhone 16 Pro Max
6. Samsung Galaxy S24+
7. Samsung Galaxy S24
8. Samsung Galaxy S24 Ultra
9. Apple iPhone 15 Pro Max
10. Apple iPhone 14 Pro
11. Apple iPhone 15 Pro

What to Consider When Phone Shopping

Long gone are the days of blurry, pixelated phone photos. The advanced camera systems on most new models can go toe-to-toe with a point-and-shoot camera.

Most camera systems now have two or more cameras on the back of the phone in addition to a front-facing selfie camera. One of the rear cameras typically has the higher resolution (48 megapixels or more) and delivers standard shots, while the others work as zoom or wide-angle lenses.

Keep in mind that a camera’s resolution isn’t the only metric that counts for high-quality photos. In recent years, phone manufacturers like Apple and Samsung have touted incremental improvements in pixel size and the cameras’ sensors. Bigger for both tends to improve quality, particularly in low-light conditions, because it allows more light to be captured.

When it comes to shooting faraway pictures, optical zoom generally outperforms digital zoom. It magnifies the image by shifting to a telephoto lens, which preserves the image quality. With digital zoom (which can go up to 100x on some phone cameras), the image is cropped and enlarged via computer processing, so you lose some of the detail and crispness. For many people, though, that’s not such a big trade-off.

For video, many models can now shoot in 4K high-definition resolution, giving your home movies a professional touch. The best phone cameras in our lists also have optical image stabilizers to help minimize blurriness from a shaky hand, particularly in low-light conditions. More phones are now also making use of AI assistance, whether for zooming, stabilizing movement to reduce blurriness, or smarter photo and video editing on the back end.

If you’d like to know more about the cameras on specific models, we cover specs on some of the more popular models below. You can also browse our smartphone ratings, which include other performance metrics, like battery life and durability.



Samsung Galaxy S25 Ultra (256GB)

✓ CR RECOMMENDED

OVERALL SCORE

87

GREEN CHOICE

CAMERA: REAR IMAGE QUALITY

CAMERA: REAR 1080P VIDEO QUALITY

CAMERA: SELFIE IMAGE QUALITY

The Samsung Galaxy S25 Ultra has one of the most capable and versatile camera systems we’ve tested, with excellent color quality, exposure levels, and sharpness, as well as low image noise. It features an impressive quad-rear camera system, which includes a massive 200-megapixel main shooter, a 10-megapixel telephoto with 3x optical zoom, a 50-megapixel telephoto with 5x optical zoom, and a 50-megapixel ultrawide. The phone is also equipped with an improved gyro sensor, which allows for more adaptive noise reduction during unsteady-hands video, Samsung says.

The S25 line features Samsung’s Galaxy AI system, which comes with a suite of handy photo-editing features that let you scrub passersby from your near-perfect shot and get suggestions for how to edit. One new fun addition: With the S25 series, Samsung introduced an AI-enabled Audio Eraser feature, which allows you to isolate and decrease specific sounds within a video, including background noise, music, and voices.

The Samsung Galaxy S25+ and S25 models have less premium camera setups—with only three rear camera sensors instead of four—but they still perform very well in our tests.



Google Pixel 9 Pro XL

✓ CR RECOMMENDED

OVERALL SCORE

79

CAMERA: REAR IMAGE QUALITY

CAMERA: REAR 1080P VIDEO QUALITY

CAMERA: SELFIE IMAGE QUALITY

Google’s flagship 6.8-inch Pixel 9 Pro XL has a particularly versatile triple-rear camera system. It includes a 50-megapixel main shooter, a 48-megapixel ultrawide camera, and a 48-megapixel telephoto with 5x optical zoom. It’s capable of taking photos and videos with excellent color, clarity, sharpness, and resolution, our testers have found.

The ultrawide camera is capable of taking up-close macro photos, a fun way to capture the ultrafine details of, say, flowers or insects. The model offers optical image stabilization, which can reduce blur when shooting in low-light conditions. And like the rest of the Pixel 9 lineup, this phone comes with a number of AI-enabled editing tools, like the ability to combine multiple shots to include everyone’s best take.

The other models in the Pixel 9 lineup also perform very well in our camera testing. The camera setup on the Google Pixel 9 Pro matches the Pro XL described above. On the basic Google Pixel 9, you lose the telephoto camera, which means you won’t have the same optical zoom ability for long-range shots, and the front-facing camera is 12 megapixels instead of 48. Video is available in 4K resolution, but the Pro models can digitally enhance videos using the Video Boost feature to get 8K resolution videos.



Apple iPhone 16 Pro Max (256GB)

✓ CR RECOMMENDED

OVERALL SCORE

86

GREEN CHOICE

CAMERA: REAR IMAGE QUALITY

CAMERA: REAR 1080P VIDEO QUALITY

CAMERA: SELFIE IMAGE QUALITY

The camera system on the iPhone 16 Pro Max rates just a notch above the one on the iPhone 15 Pro Max. The versatile triple-rear camera setup includes a 48-megapixel main rear camera, a 12-megapixel telephoto with 5x optical zoom, and a 48-megapixel ultrawide camera. Expect excellent color, clarity, and resolution from the main rear camera system and selfie camera, our testers say.

If you like to capture video with your smartphone, the iPhone 16 Pro models are the best for video quality. They can shoot 4K video at 120 frames per second in Dolby Vision, the highest resolution and frame-rate combination for video recording on any iPhone. They also offer a new pro-level Audio Mixing feature that can filter out background noise and help give the speaker’s voice a studio-quality sound.



Samsung Galaxy S24 Ultra

✓ CR RECOMMENDED

OVERALL SCORE

86

GREEN CHOICE

CAMERA: REAR IMAGE QUALITY

CAMERA: REAR 1080P VIDEO QUALITY

CAMERA: SELFIE IMAGE QUALITY

The previous generation of Samsung’s top-of-the-line phone comes with a top-notch camera system, too, one with a ton of versatility. In addition to a 12-megapixel selfie camera, the S24 Ultra features the massive 200-megapixel main rear camera, plus a 12-megapixel ultrawide, a 10-megapixel telephoto with 3x optical zoom, and a 50-megapixel with 5x optical zoom.



Apple iPhone 15 Pro Max

✓ CR RECOMMENDED

OVERALL SCORE

87

GREEN CHOICE

CAMERA: REAR IMAGE QUALITY

CAMERA: REAR 1080P VIDEO QUALITY

CAMERA: SELFIE IMAGE QUALITY

The camera system on the iPhone 15 Pro Max comes in just a hair behind the one on the newest iPhone 16 Pro Max. The rear camera system includes a 48-megapixel main camera, a 12-megapixel ultrawide, and a new 12-megapixel telephoto with 5x optical zoom, and it excels on metrics like color, resolution, and distortion. The digital zoom also reaches 25x, handy for capturing those back-of-the-crowd concert shots. The iPhone 15 Pro has the same excellent camera system but a smaller 6.1-inch display.



Apple iPhone 16 (128GB)

✓ CR RECOMMENDED

OVERALL SCORE

82

CAMERA: REAR IMAGE QUALITY

CAMERA: REAR 1080P VIDEO QUALITY

CAMERA: SELFIE IMAGE QUALITY

The standard iPhone 16 and slightly larger iPhone 16 Plus also have top-rated camera systems, though they aren’t quite as advanced as the Pro models in the lineup. The 16 and 16 Plus have a dual-rear camera system that includes a 48-megapixel main rear camera and a 12-megapixel ultrawide. The rear camera system on the 16 and 16 Plus scores slightly higher than the one on the previous year’s model, but the difference in quality isn’t substantial enough to merit an upgrade. Thanks to the improved ultrawide camera, though, both of the lower-tier iPhone 16 models gain the ability to take up-close macro shots, a feature that was previously available only on the Pros.