

Summary

The iPhone 17 Pro, released in September 2025, features a new design with a raised camera module, an aluminum unibody, and Ceramic Shield on the back. It boasts impressive performance with the A19 Pro chip, stellar battery life, and upgraded camera systems with 48MP main, ultrawide, and telephoto lenses. While Apple Intelligence enhancements are underwhelming, the phone excels in performance and camera capabilities.

Written by Lillian Brown edited by Brendan Griffiths Mar 9, 2026, 12:42 PM ET



The iPhone 17 Pro is an excellent addition to Apple's Pro lineup. Lillian Brown/Business Insider

The iPhone 17 Pro is another solid addition to Apple's lineup, featuring impressive performance and stellar camera upgrades.

Released in September 2025, the iPhone 17 Pro boasts longer battery life, better cameras, and a new processor chip. The new Pros also have a slightly different design, which we'll dig into below, but the most notable features are the battery and camera upgrades.

Our review covers the iPhone 17 Pro, which we tested in Cosmic Orange. The iPhone 17 Pro Max, the Pro's bigger sibling, offers similar features with the main differences being the Pro Max's larger display size (6.9"), longer battery life (per Apple, up to 39 hours of video playback), and the \$100 higher starting price.

The iPhone 17 Pro comes with 256GB to 1TB of storage, while the iPhone 17 Pro Max offers up to 2TB. There's no longer a 128GB option. The phones are available in Silver, Deep Blue, and Cosmic Orange.

Apple iPhone 17 Pro

The newest iPhone Pro has a 6.3" display and includes the A19 Pro chip, upgraded camera systems, and the longest iPhone battery life to date.

What we like

- Upgraded camera systems
- Stellar battery life
- Efficient A19 Pro chip

What we don't like

- Unimpressive Apple Intelligence enhancements

Specifics

- Processor: A19 Pro
- Release date: September 2025
- Rear cameras: 48MP main, 48MP ultrawide, 48MP telephoto 8x zoom
- Storage: 256GB, 512GB, 1TB

Design

At first glance, the most notable difference between the iPhone 17 Pro and its immediate predecessors is on the back of the phone. The raised camera module, or camera plateau as Apple is calling it, is now spread across the entire top of the back in a bar, with the three rear lenses on the left and the flash and LiDAR scanner on the right.

It looks great and provides a nice, clear indication that you're holding the newest iPhone, but it leaves a little more room for it to get banged up. I haven't done any major damage yet (though I've been careful to keep my keys out of the same jacket pocket that holds the phone), but I'd recommend opting for a case that covers the non-lens and sensor parts of the plateau in the middle, if you can.



The back of the iPhone 17 Pro looks different from previous generations. Lillian Brown/Business Insider

Gone are the days of the titanium frame. The iPhone 17 Pro now has an aluminum unibody. The other main physical upgrade from the previous generation is that the back of the iPhone now also uses Ceramic Shield, not just the front screen. Now, instead of one flat texture on the back of the phone, there's a slightly smoother rectangle under the camera plateau. Ceramic Shield tech adds an extra layer of durability and protection.

This is also technically Apple's largest iPhone Pro to date. The 6.3" display is the same size as the previous generation (whereas the 12 through 15 Pro models had a 6.1" display), but the height, width, and depth are each 0.02 inches larger (and the weight is 0.24 ounces heavier) than the 16 Pro. It's not a noticeable difference from the 16 Pro, but it means that an old case won't fit.

Apple Intelligence

I'm normally a meat-and-potatoes kind of smartphone user. My personal phone is an iPhone 14 Pro Max (yes, I'm due for an upgrade). The bulk of what I use a phone for is sending messages, streaming TV shows, taking photos of pets, and reading articles. Still, I was curious to give Apple Intelligence, Apple's AI system, a whirl. Originally rolled out in October 2024, Apple Intelligence offers a mix of writing tools, generative AI image features, and personal intelligence from Siri, among other features.

The main allure is the ability to talk to Siri, either verbally or by typing. You can write to it by double-tapping the bottom of your screen. As with the original Apple Intelligence release on the iPhone 16 line, it still heavily relies on ChatGPT. If you ask it basic, objective, and immediately verifiable questions like what time a game is on, it'll be able to help you out on its own. But things that require some subjectivity, like asking "what's the best TV show of all time?" will often prompt it to involve ChatGPT. If you don't want to do that, you can have it "Search the web" instead. This will open Safari and direct you to a Google AI overview answer to your question.

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You'll need to enable ChatGPT in settings after turning on Apple Intelligence. There's an option to sign in to your existing ChatGPT account if you have one and would like to keep a record of your requests, but Apple also allows you to use ChatGPT without an account. For the ChatGPT-weary, there's a "Confirm Requests" option you can toggle on that prompts you to confirm each request before it's sent to ChatGPT.

You can also offer up some small conversational prompts to Siri, like "I'm anxious" or "I'm tired," and it will offer a simple platitude, but it's very bare-bones — if you're tired, it'll simply tell you to "Get some rest." For something more complex, in this test case, saying "I don't want to finish this workout. It's hard, and I'm tired. What should I do?", it'll often puzzle Siri altogether. Rather than asking to turn to ChatGPT, it'll just respond with "I didn't get that. Could you try again?"

There are other fun, helpful Apple Intelligence features, including Writing Tools. I find these most helpful in adjusting tone in a quick message, like a text or an email, where you want to strike a different vibe, like more friendly, more professional, or more concise.

Another actually helpful tool is the Clean Up feature on photos. It's good for its name — cleaning up — but, as our [iPhone 16 Pro review](#) noted, it might not be the best option if you're looking to drastically remove large components of your photos, especially when it comes to filling in any sort of patterned background. But if you're hoping to clean up something small, like removing a leash from a photo of a dog, it's a handy feature.



The original photo shows a dog with a leash, but I attempted to remove it using the Clean Up feature.
Lillian Brown/Business Insider



For something simple like a leash, Clean Up can easily remove the object. Lillian Brown/Business Insider

If you're just looking to goof around with generative AI, the Playground app might be of interest. The app takes text prompts (and, if you're open to it, pictures from your camera roll) and creates animated cartoon-like images. There are other styles beyond animation now, too, including illustration and sketch. You can also blend emojis with your own unique descriptions with Genmoji. It can also help you create a personalized avatar. Additionally, Playground allows you to use ChatGPT, which can create image styles reminiscent of oil painting, watercolor, vector art, anime, and print. I can't think of many real-world applications for it, but it's fun enough if you're into that kind of thing.

Apple also rolled out Live Translation around the same time that the iPhone 17 Pro launched. I admittedly haven't had much cause to use this, so I've yet to put it to the test rigorously, but the feature is meant to help provide translations on messages, phone calls, and FaceTime calls.

Visual Intelligence is also an interesting feature that I've found both helpful and not. Users can learn about objects through their iPhone screen. If you screenshot something, you can swipe your finger over an object and either click to look up/learn more/ask about it or see results from Google. The "Ask" feature usually relies on ChatGPT and is mostly helpful. That said, it'll still get a few little things wrong. At one point, I swiped a search over an image of an iPhone 16 Pro, and ChatGPT thought it was an iPhone 14 Pro.

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When you screenshot chunks of text, you can also request a summary, which I've found so far to be pretty helpful and accurate. You can also use Visual Intelligence through your camera to explore the outside world. If you hold down your Camera

Control button, you can point your camera at anything and ask ChatGPT what something is or search Google for it. Right now, Visual Intelligence is probably best suited for shopping, if you see something you like and want to explore similar items.

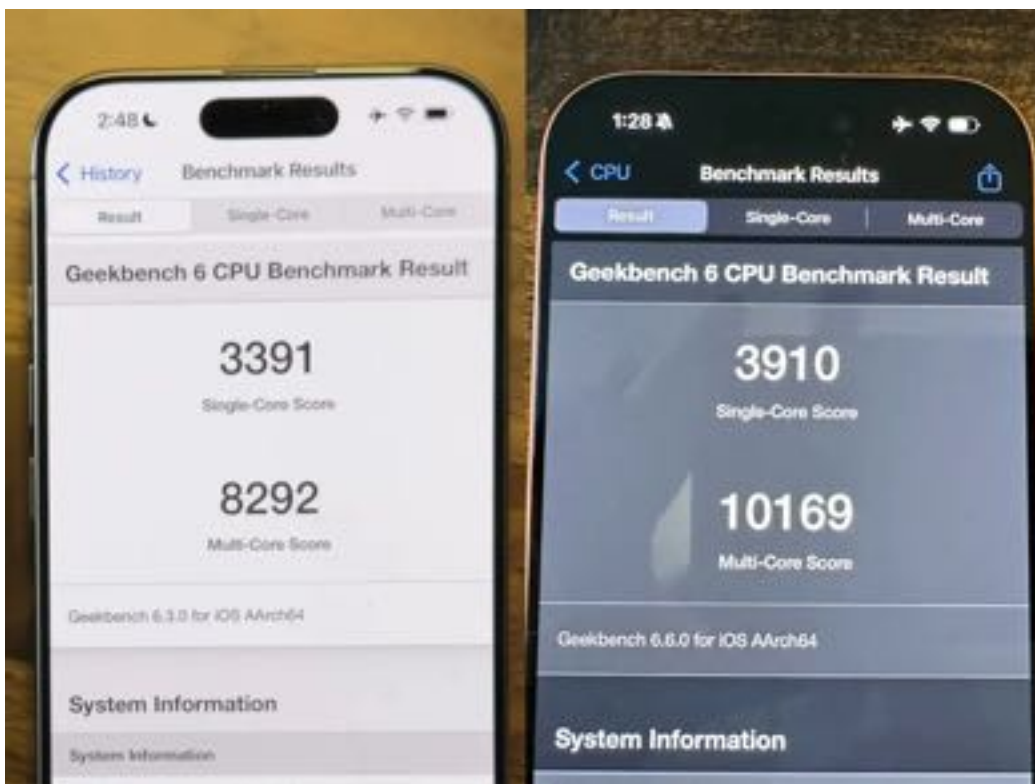
Other than Visual Intelligence, Live Translation, some new Playground updates, and a few other small features, most of these aren't huge improvements on previous Apple Intelligence. I'd like to see more advancements from Siri and have it be less reliant on ChatGPT.

A big Siri update has been in the works for a while, and in January 2026, a deal [was announced](#) confirming that Apple was teaming up with Google to bring Gemini support to Siri. That's an encouraging sign, given Siri has seriously underdelivered on all those promises it made back in 2024.

Performance

The iPhone 17 Pro runs on the A19 Pro chip, compared to the A18 Pro chip used in the iPhone 16 Pro and the A19 chip used in the base iPhone 17. The new chip is faster and more efficient than its predecessor, as evidenced by Geekbench 6 CPU benchmark results that show a significant improvement over what we found in the iPhone 16 Pro.

On the iPhone 16 Pro, our review logged a 3391 single-core score and 8292 multi-core score. When I've run the same benchmark test multiple times on the iPhone 17 Pro, it's resulted in single-core scores ranging from 3806 to 3910 and multi-core scores ranging from 9889 to 10169.



The iPhone 17 Pro (right) scores much higher than the iPhone 16 Pro (left) in key benchmark results. Antonio Villas-Boas/Business Insider (left); Lillian Brown/Business Insider (right)

Apple claims up to 33 hours of video playback for the iPhone 17 Pro, up from 27 hours for the iPhone 16 Pro. So far, the battery has impressed. After giving the phone a full charge, I've found I could comfortably get through a standard day of use and then not plug it in overnight and still have some decent charge in the morning.

The iPhone 17 Pro finished our battery test at 69%. This is an improvement from the iPhone 16 Pro's 63% and the iPhone 15 Pro's 58%. The iPhone 16 Pro Max finished the test at 74%.

This test included two runs of the 3DMark Wild Life Stress Test, five runs of the Geekbench 6 CPU Test, two hours of video streaming (one hour on-demand and one hour live), and one hour of music streaming while connected to a Bluetooth speaker. This testing process (which amounts to about 4 hours of intensive testing) is meant to simulate the rigors of a typical day of phone use. We charge phones to 100% and then record the final battery percentage after performing the test.

It's worth noting that these battery observations and tests for the iPhone 17 Pro were conducted exclusively over WiFi. Connecting to a 5G or 4G LTE cellular network will drain a battery more.



The iPhone 17 Pro held up well with graphic-heavy stress tests. Lillian Brown/Business Insider

My job as a streaming editor means I watch a *lot* of TV, and I've done a solid amount of video streaming on this phone and found that even after several continuous hours of streaming on Netflix and Peacock, the phone doesn't heat up much or lose significant battery.

By far the biggest battery suck that I've witnessed (other than running a heavy-duty stress test) is with gaming, which is no surprise. This is especially true for high-performance games, like "Diablo Immortal." That said, even after gaming for 20 minutes, the phone was only slightly warm, which I

credit to this generation's upgraded cooling technology (a laser-welded vapor chamber combined with the new aluminum unibody).

Cameras

As someone who has been using iPhones for well over a decade, I have consistently found cameras to be the bane of my devotion to Apple products. They're just inferior to some of those found on comparable smartphone products (like Samsung's), particularly in zoom capabilities and overall quality. I'm pleased to report that the iPhone 17 Pro offers Apple's best camera to date.

The iPhone 17 Pro has a full 48MP Pro Fusion camera system, including a 48MP Fusion Main, a 48MP Fusion Ultra Wide, and a 48MP Fusion Telephoto lens. The key upgrade is the telephoto lens, which was 12MP in the iPhone 16 Pro. The zoom has also vastly improved, with 0.5x, 1x, 2x, 4x, and 8x optical zoom options. The maximum on the iPhone 16 Pro was 5x, up from a 3x max on the iPhone 15 Pro and iPhone 14 Pro.

The zoom has made a notable difference, especially coming from someone who uses an older generation. When photographing geese on a walk, the sheer zoom power was remarkable. Shooting from the same spot on both the iPhone 17 Pro and iPhone 14 Pro Max, I could see individual textured feathers on a goose's wing using the 17 Pro's maximum zoom.



A goose photographed from a distance with the maximum zoom on an iPhone 14 Pro Max. Lillian Brown/Business Insider



A goose wing photographed from the same distance with the maximum zoom on an iPhone 17 Pro. Lillian Brown/Business Insider

It's not just the zoom that's improved, at least when compared to the 14 Pro. Images, in general, whether I'm shooting landscapes during the day or taking pictures at night, are a little warmer and crisper.

The selfie cameras have also improved by leaps and bounds. The selfie photos are of better quality and seem to capture a moving target, like a fidgety pet, a little more easily. The past several generations of iPhone Pro front cameras have featured a 12MP TrueDepth camera and tap-to-zoom. The iPhone 17 Pro comes with an 18MP Center Stage front camera, tap-to-zoom and rotate, Center Stage for photos, ultra-stabilized video, dual capture, and Center Stage for video calls.



The iPhone 17 Pro (right) takes much better selfies than the iPhone 14 Pro Max (left).
Lillian Brown/Business Insider

The Center Stage feature is the flashiest upgrade of the bunch. The feature helps the front-facing camera keep you centered in the frame by automatically zooming and rotating (though you can toggle it on and off if it's not quite your speed). If you're a big group selfie taker (which I'm not) and trying to get multiple people centered in a shot, there's definite merit in this, but if you're just taking pictures of yourself, it doesn't seem that necessary. However, it is helpful if you're taking a selfie and want to swap from portrait to landscape without rotating your entire phone. Instead, you can just click a little icon on the screen, and it will do it for you.

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The dedicated, touch-sensitive Camera Control button returns once again, first introduced with the iPhone 16 series. As someone who is coming from no camera button, I find it to be a helpful feature. You might find it even more useful on the larger Pro Max, where your hand might not wrap around it as easily. I've found it most helpful when I've been trying to snap photos outside during this (particularly chilly) winter when my phone screen doesn't always respond to my gloved hands or cold, bare fingers.

That said, I sometimes bump it and turn the camera on unintentionally. I've also noticed that once you use the button to click into the camera app, the zoom isn't that

helpful. More often than not, especially when I'm looking for a precise zoom, I end up fixing it on-screen via the traditional pinch-and-expand method.

Should you buy the iPhone 17 Pro?

If you have a fully functional iPhone 16 Pro and you're trying to decide whether to opt for the 17 Pro, you could probably wait for the next generation, which comes out in September every year. But if you're like me and have a prior generation (like the iPhone 15 Pro or iPhone 14 Pro) and are due for an upgrade, this is a worthy successor.

The Apple Intelligence updates leave something to be desired, and I don't think the new design is necessarily reinventing the wheel, but the solid battery life we've come to expect from the iPhone Pro family and the substantial camera upgrades make this a solid and durable investment for the next few years.

If you do decide to take the plunge, we recommend at least getting one of the best [iPhone 17 Pro cases](#). For an extra layer of protection, you can also try an [iPhone 17 Pro screen protector](#).

If you like the sound of what you've heard about the 17 Pro but would appreciate a larger screen and even bigger battery, the 17 Pro Max is likely worth the extra spend. Otherwise, you're getting the same features between the two as far as power and camera specs go.



Lillian Brown

Senior Associate Editor of Streaming

I'm the Senior Associate Editor of Streaming at Business Insider. A lifelong entertainment and media buff, I specialize in helping you find how to watch your favorite shows, movies, and sporting events. My areas of expertise My main expertise is in streaming services, television, and film. I've tested nearly every major streaming platform, many of which I've used for several years (and through several rounds of price hikes and rebrands). I evaluate the services for content, user-friendliness, cross-device compatibility, and other metrics to see how they hold up in an increasingly competitive market. In addition to my entertainment background, I also help support our deals and tech verticals. I contribute to our coverage of virtual private networks (VPNs) and smartphones. My experience I've been writing about entertainment, sports, TV, and film for over seven years, starting my career in the Living/Arts department of The Boston Globe. I went on to write entertainment features, roundups, and conduct celebrity interviews for publications like Vulture, TV Guide, Esquire, Time, and The Daily Beast before joining Business Insider as a streaming specialist on the Reviews