



● ULTRAPORTABLE NOTEBOOK

IBM ThinkPad X41

PC PRO
A LIST

PC PRO
RECOMMENDED

PRICE £1,365 (£1,603)

SUPPLIER www.pcvb.com

DELIVERY £10 (£12)

INTERNET www.lenovo.com/uk

VERDICT Great build quality, a remarkably low weight and impressive battery life – with the extended-life battery – make this the pick of the ultraportables. It's expensive, but worth it.

When the ThinkPad X40 claimed its place on the A List in July 2004 (see issue 117, p52), we knew it would take something special to usurp it. But we didn't think it would take this long, and we certainly hadn't anticipated the X40's successor, the X41, to be the one to succeed where so many other ultraportables had failed.

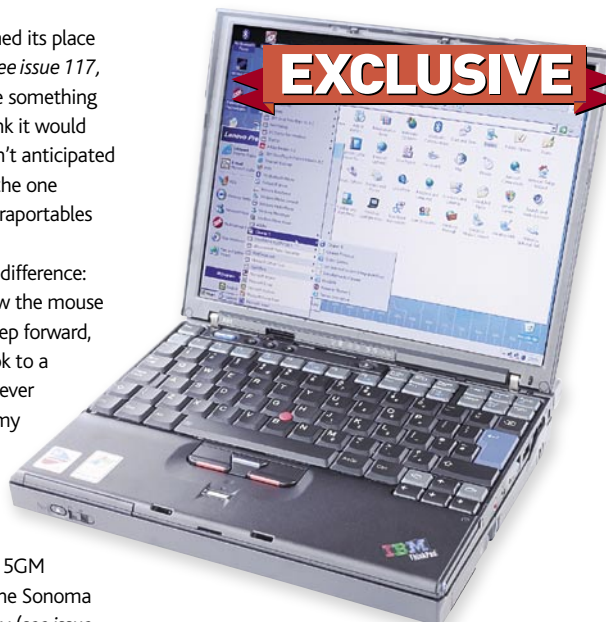
Externally, there's only one real difference: there's a fingerprint reader just below the mouse buttons. It may seem like a minor step forward, but if you're rolling out this notebook to a team of users then it means you'll never need to have that dreaded 'I forgot my password' conversation again.

But the main changes have happened beneath the X41's calm, black exterior. The first item to note is the chipset, with Intel's 915GM Express in place. This brings with it the Sonoma version of Intel's Centrino technology (see issue 126, p52), in this case with an 802.11a/b/g wireless radio.

The processor has also changed. Gone is the X40's Ultra Low Voltage offering, to be replaced by a 'mere' Low Voltage chip. The 1.5GHz Pentium M 758 certainly delivers in terms of performance. Quite apart from the impressive 1.37 in our application benchmarks, it feels sprightly in day-to-day use – both on the mains and off.

We expected the 915GM chipset and higher-voltage processor to affect this notebook's battery life, and to a certain extent it did. Whereas the extended-life eight-cell battery kept the X40 going for over seven hours in our light-use tests, the X41 lasted for six hours, 48 minutes.

The eight-cell battery is actually an optional extra, at £129 exc VAT, but one we recommend you buy. The X41 is designed to be used on the move, and the standard battery will last for only



The bundled docking station makes it easy to use the X41 as a main PC.

about two-and-a-half hours under light use (unfortunately, IBM was unable to supply us with a four-cell battery for this test, so we don't have exact figures). Add the extended-life battery, and you have a total life of more than nine hours.

Certain bundles of the X41 will be available with an extended battery by default, but the configuration we tested – identified by either 2527-6GG or US36GUK – includes the handy X4 UltraBase docking station, complete with a DVD-ROM/CD-RW combo drive. The X4 adds parallel, serial and PS/2 ports, none of which are included on the X41, and also provides three USB 2 ports.

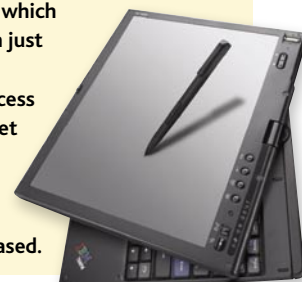
Aside from the lack of legacy ports, the X41 is well connected. Along with a single Type II PC Card slot, 56K modem, Gigabit Ethernet, VGA out, plus headphone and microphone sockets, there are two USB 2 ports, infrared and Bluetooth.

There's one other change since the release of the X40: this is now an 'IBM' ThinkPad in name only. Chinese computing giant Lenovo now owns what was IBM's personal computer group. This raises questions over whether the level of customer support and build quality ThinkPad owners have become used to will continue – bear in mind that IBM has won awards for its notebooks' reliability, service and support, as voted for by PC Pro readers, consecutively for the past seven years.

Fortunately, all the signs so far are positive. The ThinkPad division of IBM has been very

ThinkPad tablet debut

At long last, this year will see the world's first ThinkPad tablet PC. Wisely based on the X41 chassis, which helps it to weigh just 1.61kg, it seems destined for success – at least in tablet PC terms. We'll bring you the review as soon as units are released.



autonomous for years, and in reality it seems to have made little difference whether it's reporting to IBM or Lenovo. Build quality is to the same exacting standard, if not better: the lid of the X41 is actually stronger than that of the X40.

We were also pleased to see that the screen is a little brighter than before, while the keyboard retains the trademark ThinkPad quality – you simply won't find a better keyboard on an ultraportable, with a great feel combined with large, well proportioned keys.

There are some software tweaks as well. Press the blue Access IBM button and you'll see an explanation page about your new purchase – not generic to ThinkPads, but customised to the X41 – and which also provides a shortcut to its Protect & Recover feature. This not only allows you to back up data, but provides an easy way to recover the system to its original factory state – the only downside is that this disk image consumes disk space, with 51.9GB left from 60GB.

We're disappointed with the warranty: one year's return-to-base cover pales in comparison to the three years' on-site cover provided by the likes of Dell with its business notebooks. Then again, ThinkPads are less likely to need repairing than any other notebooks around – as shown time and time again by our Reliability survey.

With the single caveat of buying the eight-cell extended-life battery, we have no hesitation in placing the X41 on the A List: its combination of low weight, unrivalled build quality and data security make it the ideal ultraportable for the business buyer.

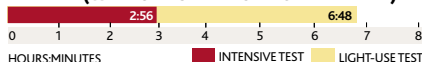
TIM DANTON



Even with the eight-cell battery in place, the X41 weighs only 1.49kg.

● RESULTS

BATTERY (WITH OPTIONAL EIGHT-CELL BATTERY)



2D SPEED



WP/SPREADSHEET: 1.53 DATABASE: 1.42
2D GRAPHICS: 1.01 MULTIMEDIA: 1.34

BETTER →

PC PRO RATINGS

PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
FEATURES & DESIGN	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★
OVERALL	★★★★★

SPECIFICATIONS 1.5GHz Pentium M 758 LV; 512MB PC2-4200 RAM; 60GB hard disk; Intel GMA 900 graphics; 12.1in 1,024 x 768 TFT; 56K modem; infrared; Bluetooth; Gigabit Ethernet; 802.11a/b/g WLAN; 2 x USB 2; VGA; Type II PC Card slot; docking station with combo DVD-ROM/CD-RW drive; Windows XP Professional; 1yr RTB warranty. Dimensions: 268 x 211 x 21mm (WDH). Weight: 1.27kg (1.49kg with 8-cell battery). Part code: US36GUK.