



● **ULTRA PORTABLE CENTRINO NOTEBOOK**

**PC PRO
A LIST**

IBM ThinkPad X40

PRICE £1,222 (£1,436 inc VAT)

DELIVERY £10 (£12 inc VAT)

INTERNET www.ibm.com/uk

SUPPLIER www.bechtle.co.uk (code: 161008)

VERDICT This beautifully built laptop offers the holy trinity of ultra portables: supreme lightness, great battery life and rugged build quality. Expensive, but worth it.

In a world where notebooks are all starting to feel the same, IBM still manages to set itself apart from the rest. We're not just talking about the black, angular styling – this may seem hideously aged to some, but you can't deny the ThinkPad's authoritative looks. What really sets ThinkPads apart, though, are the things photographs don't show.

One important factor is the level of customer support, something that has earned IBM a reader-voted *PC Pro* award for no less than five years in succession – an unparalleled achievement. The only thing to be aware of is that the X40's standard warranty, though three years in length, only includes return-to-base cover.

Fortunately, chances are that you won't need to take advantage of the customer support too frequently, as the X40 shares the same exacting build quality that marks out all ThinkPads. This shows itself in a sturdy lid made out of a magnesium composite material, which also guards the bottom of the chassis. The hard disk is now protected by IBM's Active Protection System too, which automatically parks the heads if the X40 is subject to sudden movement – although this can occasionally be irritating when you're working on the move, it offers an extra level of protection if you knock or drop the ThinkPad.

This isn't the only difference from the X40's



The X40 is absolutely tiny, as demonstrated by the size of a CD in comparison to the notebook.

predecessor, the X31 (see issue 106, p69), for IBM has also shaved a further 400g off the weight and reduced bulk by 20 per cent. Although there are slimmer and lighter notebooks around, such as the 1.1kg Toshiba Portégé R100 (see issue 108, p60), the X40 boasts a winning combination of impressive battery life and a fair turn of speed.

The performance comes courtesy of a 1.2GHz Low Voltage Intel Pentium M processor, with the X40 proving to be a predictable 20 to 30 per cent faster than the 900MHz Ultra Low Voltage chip inside the Portégé. And where we were quite pleased to eke out two hours of life from the R100, the X40 stopped just shy of four hours in our light-use test. This is based on the four-cell battery that comes as standard with the X40; you can buy an eight-cell battery for £124, which increases the weight by 200g.

Another area where IBM wins is its keyboard design. How IBM can fit such a comfortable keyboard into this small an area is a mystery. All the keys are nice and large, there's little function doubling (for instance, Home, End, PgUp and PgDn are all separate buttons and are situated in a sensible position above the main keyboard), and there's a decent amount of travel too. It

would be perfect, were it not for the continued absence of a Windows key.

As ever, the red nipple in the centre of the keyboard proved a capable replacement for a mouse when on the move, especially as this notebook doesn't boast the largest of screens. This is inevitable, of course, and we can't criticise the 12.1in TFT for brightness, viewing angles or clarity – it's a superb example of its type. Another nice touch is the ThinkLight mounted into the top bezel, which shines down on the keyboard for those occasions when you're typing in darkness.

The bezel is also home to two antennae to maximise the WLAN reception, with an 802.11b adaptor built into this version of the X40; the only shame is that this notebook doesn't support 802.11g. The X40 is armed with Bluetooth, infrared and a V.92 modem, while a gigabit Ethernet port is found on the right-hand side of the machine. Other than this, IBM finds space for an SD card slot, Type II PC Card slot, microphone jack, headphone jack, VGA out and two USB 2 ports.

There's no integrated optical drive, but you can add one via the left-hand USB port, which is accompanied by a slot to power the drive too. IBM is no doubt hoping most people will buy the X4 UltraBase instead, which adds a further £123 to its coffers even without an optical drive; a combo CD-RW/DVD-ROM costs £176. The UltraBase adds a PS/2 and three USB 2 ports, plus connectors for serial, parallel and a D-SUB.

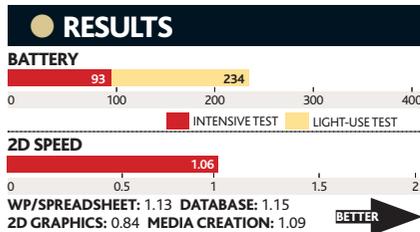
It's easy to see how the cost of the X40 could mount up, especially if you fall into the trap of buying a non-TopSeller model. TopSeller marks IBM's so-called special offers, but as these provide savings of up to £500 on standard models and the offers can run for months, it makes little sense to choose a standard offering unless your business can negotiate its own discount.

With that proviso in place, we've no hesitation in recommending and A-Listing the ThinkPad X40 – and in particular, the model identified by part number TS079UK (the current TopSeller). It offers a phenomenal level of protection when on the move, provides stunning battery life considering its miniscule size, and using it is an absolute pleasure thanks to the quality screen and keyboard.

TIM DANTON



There's no optical drive as standard, but the optional X4 UltraBase slots onto the bottom of the X40 to provide a drive bay and plentiful ports.



PC PRO RATINGS

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

SPECIFICATIONS 1.2GHz Low Voltage Pentium M; 512MB PC2700 RAM; 40GB hard disk; Intel Extreme 2 graphics; 12.1in 1,024 x 768 TFT; V.92 modem; 10/100/1000 Ethernet; 802.11b WLAN; Bluetooth; infrared; 2 x USB 2; VGA; Type II PC Card slot; SD card slot; Windows XP Professional; 3yrs RTB warranty. Dimensions: 267 x 211 x 23mm (WDH). Weight: 1.24kg. Part number: TS079UK