



Toshiba Portégé M200

PC PRO
A LIST

PRICE £1,190 (£1,398 inc VAT)

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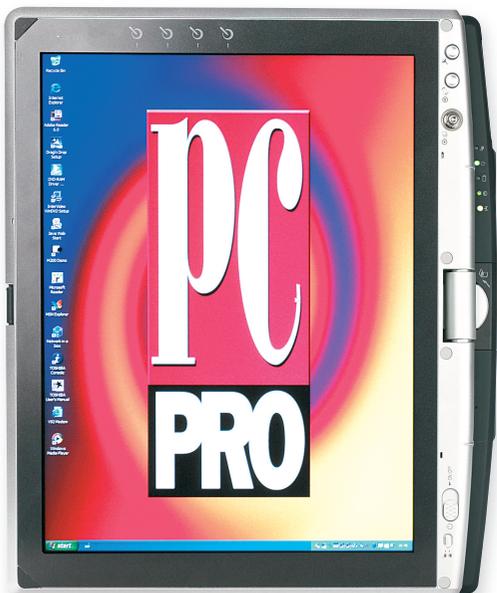
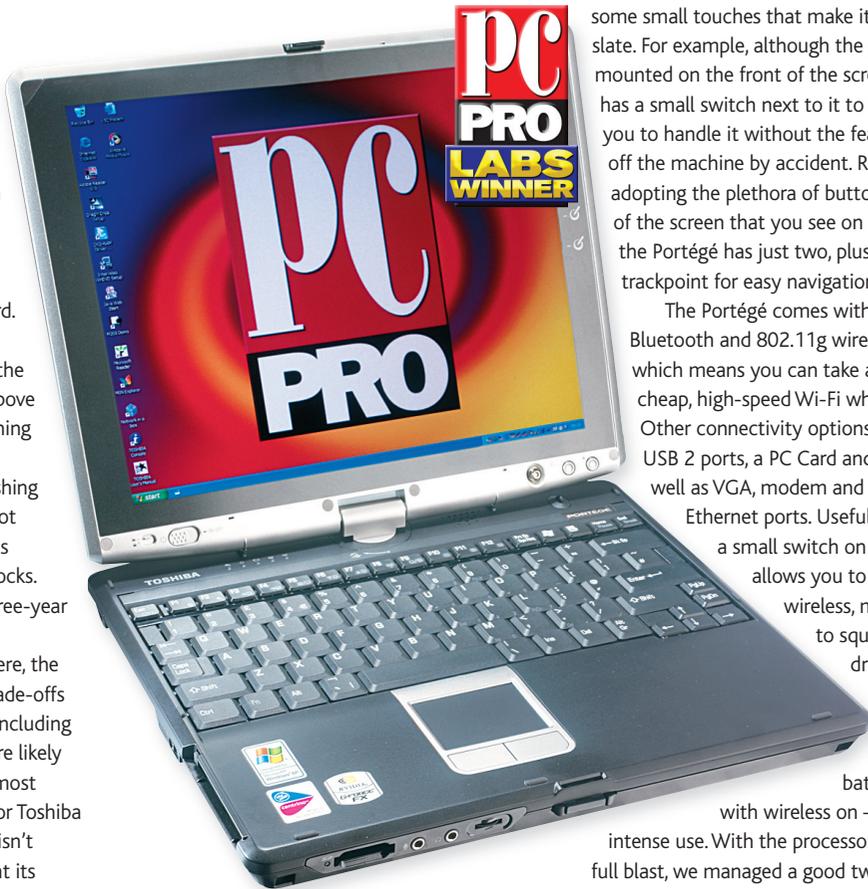
VERDICT Everything a convertible tablet PC should be: great to use as a conventional notebook, equally great as a slate. You pay for the quality though.

The Toshiba Portégé M200 is a convertible tablet PC: one second you can use it as a normal laptop, the next you can swivel the screen around 180 degrees and be writing directly onto the screen in full tablet mode. In terms of size, it sits nicely between the two Acer models, with enough width to fit in a 12.1in screen and an excellent keyboard.

Like the other convertible models, it has a swivel hinge at the bottom of the screen to allow it to pivot into place above the keyboard. Although there's no latching mechanism as showcased by the Acer C111TCi, which prevents you from pushing the screen around accidentally, the pivot itself has a nice, solid feel that indicates it could stand up to its fair share of knocks. Should it fail, you're backed up by a three-year international warranty.

Like all the tablet PCs on review here, the designers have been forced to make trade-offs in order to keep the price down while including the kind of features that tablet users are likely to want. In the case of the M200, the most annoying trade-off is in the memory, for Toshiba supplies only 256MB as standard. This isn't enough to keep Windows XP working at its best, let alone make the most of the kind of memory-hungry applications that are now common. Fortunately, there's one memory socket free for upgrades.

A second compromise is in the included



With a fine 12.1in screen, the M200 is almost the perfect size for a tablet PC.

accessories. Unlike the cheaper C111TCi, the M200 doesn't come with an optical drive as standard. Of course, you can install software on the Portégé by sharing an optical drive on a desktop machine across a network, but this is slow and relies on you having a second machine and, given the other specs of this machine, you could easily use it as your main computer. At this price, we'd at least expect to see an external CD-RW drive bundled, if not a DVD writer.

Despite the 1.6GHz Pentium M at the heart of the M200, performance was slightly disappointing. Although it has the same speed processor as the Acer C302XMi, it failed to match that machine's performance, and indeed was closer to the slower machines in the tests. However, this apparent lack of speed isn't a fatal flaw in a machine that will largely be used for business applications, for which this is perfectly suited. While we wouldn't recommend the M200 for portable video work, for most other tasks you're really not going to notice any sluggishness.

However, what makes the Portégé appealing – and ultimately makes it a winner – is that the overall package has been crafted by designers who have worked hard to consider

how a tablet PC will be used. In laptop mode it's a perfectly decent laptop, with a screen that's bright and easy to read, a keyboard that is great to use anywhere, and enough ports to satisfy most users. Just note the lack of FireWire.

Flip it into tablet mode, and you suddenly have something that's light and well-balanced enough to use while standing, and that has some small touches that make it feel like a real slate. For example, although the power button is mounted on the front of the screen's bezel, it has a small switch next to it to lock it, allowing you to handle it without the fear of turning off the machine by accident. Rather than adopting the plethora of buttons on the edge of the screen that you see on some machines, the Portégé has just two, plus a small trackpoint for easy navigation.

The Portégé comes with both Bluetooth and 802.11g wireless built-in, which means you can take advantage of cheap, high-speed Wi-Fi where available. Other connectivity options include two USB 2 ports, a PC Card and SD slots, as well as VGA, modem and 10/100

Ethernet ports. Usefully, there's also a small switch on the side that allows you to turn off wireless, making it easier to squeeze the last drop of battery life from the machine. However, battery life is good with wireless on – even under intense use. With the processor running at full blast, we managed a good two-and-a-half hours work.

The size is also right. While the C111TCi will be too cramped for many users, and the C302XMi too heavy, the M200 is almost the perfect size for a tablet PC. The screen is large enough, and, at its native resolution of 1,400 x 1,050, crisp and bright. It's also of sufficient quality to cope with games, as we discovered when we took advantage of the nVidia GeForce FX Go5200 chip with which it ships. The only time we had problems with the screen was in direct sunlight, when it became unreadable.

It's a clean, simple and effective design that manages to work well both as a laptop and a tablet PC, something that only the smaller Acer can also claim. When originally launched, the M200 cost a whopping £1,699, which was clearly far too much. Its current price is much more reasonable and, overall, offers a lot of tablet for the money. If Toshiba were to bite the bullet, upgrade the RAM and add an external CD-RW drive, this would be tablet perfection.

PC PRO RATINGS

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