

2 July 2007

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[HTC X7500 Advantage Review](#)

Better than a notebook, more than a Pocket PC

Month after month, HTC throws in a wide range of Pocket PCs and Smartphones on the market in the hope of overwhelming its rivals (e.g. Eten, Palm, HP). Regardless the fact that HTC has already won the fight, I still think that the newcomers on the market like Asus, Gigabyte and even I-mate will make it hard for HTC to maintain its number 1 spot as a Pocket PC manufacturer. The Taiwanese company seems to develop a flawless market strategy which pursues a single goal that has become nearly an obsession - "the offerings of many models for as many targets as possible". Furthermore, starting with the X7500 Advantage, HTC takes on a new adventure that will ultimately make it stand out as an UMPC manufacturer. Top of the HTC's high-end lineup, Advantage is destined for the road and businessmen will soon find out that it's better to get the 350 grams HTC device than a 3 kilograms notebook. Officially announced in January 2007, HTC X7500 Advantage also known as HTC Athena has been made available in February through T-Mobile and Dopod operators. The price of the device starts from 1,200 USD and can reach almost 1,500 USD, depending on the location and the sales package.

Design At first glance, you will surely notice that this is no ordinary phone or PDA. It doesn't look like neither of those two, but still it embeds both and even more. When the user combines the two independent parts, the device becomes a miniaturization of a notebook. If you don't need the detachable QWERTY keyboard you can easily handle the device with your stylus because of the extra-large display. Moreover, if you are by any chance a trekkie (Star Trek fan), then you'll be thrilled to own the device that has been the well-known multipurpose tool used by Spock. Even if it's not, it surely looks like, so are you prepared to communicate, scan, search or localize (with) your target? Somewhere between a Pocket PC and a notebook, Advantage weighs no more than 359 grams (battery included) and measures exactly 133.5 mm x 98 mm x 16 mm (20 mm with keyboard). The main part of the device is actually a huge display framed in a black polished compound. Useful in both modes, landscape or portrait, Advantage has a few external keys more or less intuitive. I will describe those by handling the device in landscape mode as it seems to be the "default" mode. On front left of the display, users can find 3 intuitive buttons: the OK and Start buttons plus the 5-way navigation controller. Opposite these, on the right side of the display, you can find the Internet Explorer button which enables users' access to the Web and the secondary video call camera. Above the display there are 3 small LEDs that alert the user for missing calls/messages, Bluetooth/WiFi or GSM connections. On the back of the device, there's only a very small Reset button and the 3 Megapixel main camera. There's a big slot on the bottom of the device where you'll discover the miniSD slot card, the SIM slot and the 2200 mAh battery. Based on a magnetic system and the 8-pins connector on the bottom the QWERTY keyboard can be attached whenever you need it. The right side of the device features the stylus slot, the camera key, the power and the communication manager buttons. On the left side there's a miniUSB port, a 3.5 mm jack port and the TV-out port. The device features dual external speakers, so you'll find these on both sides of Advantage. The detachable QWERTY keyboard is practical with middle-sized keys easy to use. The weird thing is that you won't hear any sound when pushing the keys or anything near, so you'll have to be more careful about what you write. Other than that, the keyboard can also protect the big display when it's not used as a text input device. Buyers have the choice of acquiring Advantage without any extra accessories for a lower price. Anyway, besides the nice leather carrying pouch, the sales package may include a complete Anywhere kit set.

Display and Camera HTC's Advantage features an unusually large display that makes texts

easy to read just like on a regular PC or notebook. It uses an ATI W2284 graphic chipset which doesn't seem to visually improve the quality of the display, but it's there and definitely adds to the reliability and stability of the device. The TFT touchscreen display supports 65k colors and 640 x 480 pixels resolution. Perfectly visible in any kind of environment (day or night), the display can also offer a complete gaming experience through its size and powerful graphical chipset. Because of the large screen, it's a real pleasure to use it as a GPS device when you're driving your car. Unlike any notebooks manufactured these days, HTC X7500 Advantage integrates 2 excellent cameras that enable users to take good quality pictures. The main 3 Megapixel camera features autofocus and flash, as well as mirror for self portrait and self timer. The secondary VGA CMOS front camera takes advantage of the 3G compatibility of the device and is destined for video calls, but it can also be used to take lower quality pictures. This is the first 3 Megapixel camera included in a HTC device and an important milestone for the Taiwanese company which will most likely continue to improve the quality of its integrated cameras. The main camera can take pictures in 6 different resolutions ranging from 160 x 120 pixels to 2048 x 1536 pixels, and in 4 different qualities (basic, normal, fine and super fine). A full range of functions can be accessed and set for the camera such as: shutter sound, shoot option, backlight, contrast, hue, saturation and many more. The pictures are saved in .jpeg format on the main memory of the device or right on the 8GB microdrive. As you can see from the pictures below, the images are pretty good and users will be able to take great landscape shots or more detailed pictures. Furthermore, both cameras can be used for recording clips in 4 compatible resolutions: 128 x 96 pixels, 176 x 144 pixels, 320 x 240 pixels and 352 x 288 (CIF) pixels. The latter is the best as it was designed to be easy to convert to PAL or NTSC standards. The resulting movie won't have a square image, but an aspect ratio of 4:3. Overall, the main camera performed very well and most likely is the best ever included by HTC in its devices.

Menu and Software Nothing out of the ordinary for HTC's Advantage main menu. If you are familiar with HTC devices, you will easily recognize all of its features. The device runs on Windows Mobile 5.0 operating system with Messaging and Security Feature Pack featuring the AKU 3.3.1 which is even newer than HTC's P4350 AKU. Besides the usual security updates, the latest AKU 3.3 improves the boot-load speed and gives users more ROM and RAM memory. Furthermore, the Bluetooth DUN (Dial-up networking) has been removed and replaced with Bluetooth PAN (Personal Area Network) version, so if you have applications that require DUN don't flash your operating system. Also, Modem Link has been replaced with a new utility called Internet Sharing and WiFi connection supports WPA2. For those that are using Internet Explorer for surfing the web there's a new compatibility with AJAX (Asynchronous JavaScript and XML). The device comes with some pre-installed third-party programs and applications such as the usual Java Manager developed by Intent, Adobe Reader 2.0 LE, Streaming Media. The updated AKU also enables users to send vCards via SMS as well as a better handling of the latter. There's also an HTC homeplug on the Today screen which show big icons of different functions of the operating system like: screen orientation, QuickGPS, display brightness, communication manager and battery. Again, you will be able to close your running programs from the Task Manager, or you can opt to end programs by tapping the "X" button or tapping and holding it for 3 seconds. The first "piece of resistance" featured by HTC Advantage is the new VueFLO technology. This new technology has been entirely developed by HTC, but it has limited capabilities in Advantage. Basically, you can use the technology for surfing the Internet as a motion sensor assistant. If you start your browser with the VueFLO technology enabled, you'll be able to scroll the pages up/down or left/right by simply leaning the device in whichever direction you need. The new technology has great potential and will probably be very useful in the gaming industry. Overall, the operating system runs much faster and smoother than those featuring older AKUs, plus it brings new options and features which are very useful these days.

Communication The quad-band (GSM 850 / 900 / 1800 / 1900) network compatible device feature HSDPA

connectivity, GPRS, EDGE and WLAN (802.11 b/g) and built-in GPS navigator. HTC embedded anything that a businessman can dream of when he's on the go. This is a versatile tool in terms of communication and was especially developed for long business trips. With only 45 kbps download and 25 kbps upload, EDGE connection was the only problem I had encountered. I had very high speeds when testing the HSDPA connection with up to 795 kbps for downloads and 217 kbps for uploads. That's more than I had expected from an HTC device, but there's also the possibility that the results could score much better on other networks in different countries. HTC X7500 scored the usual speed registered for all HTC devices when testing the WLAN connection - no more than 774 kbps for downloads and 312 kbps for uploads. The device also features Bluetooth 2.0 connectivity as well as miniUSB 1.1 port for PC synchronization. I have registered data transfer speeds of up to 28 kbps on Bluetooth connectivity, but that could also vary a lot. While the device was not designed to be used truly as a phone it still gets phone functions. The GSM signal reception was very good until I changed the network band to WCDMA and half the signal was lost. You will often be able to talk on the phone only by using some headsets, and fortunately, the device features 3.5 mm jack port for that. The sound is very clear and very loud so you can be anywhere and still be able to hear the caller.

Processor and Memory HTC X7500 Advantage features an Intel PXA270 processor running at 624 MHz speeds. Very few brands developed devices that integrate so powerful processors. As a matter of fact, neither of the HTC's branded devices feature this kind of processor. It's hard to compare the Advantage's test results with other devices which have less powerful processors, but you can take in consideration the fact that all devices feature the same operating system. Standard use of the device such as Internet navigation, menu navigation or simply text reading will give no troubles at all. It was weird that the PDF reading was so sluggish, as I was expecting a smoother experience. Changing from page to page was a really pain as it took more seconds than it was necessary. Otherwise, the device works almost flawlessly even with more programs running in the background. The second "piece of resistance", somewhat expected for this kind of device is storage related and translates in the integration of an 8 GB microdrive. The mini hard disk is branded Hitachi, one of the best company in the field and can be formatted any time the user wants. Besides the 8 GB storage space, Advantage features 128 MB RAM and 256 MB ROM memory and a miniSD slot card for memory expansion. These high numbers ensures the users of the versatility of the device, which can easily be used as a notebook, GPS device and mobile phone.

Multimedia The device features Audio Manager and Windows Media Player 10 which is compatible with AMR, AAC, WAV, WMA and MP3 files. HTC Advantage also integrates a TV-out which lets you output screen contents to an external viewing device. The sound doesn't differ too much compared to the rest of HTC's devices. It's rather dull with no bass at all and barely a tint of highs. Even using better headphones and the included equalizer won't improve the experience, but people that are not so fond of sounds can use the device as MP3 player in case of necessity. Still, you can easily watch a movie on the device as the dual external speakers are making a lot of "noise". Even at higher volumes, the external sound kept clear and no distortions were detected.

Battery The 2200 mAh Li-Ion rechargeable battery is one of the biggest in terms of capacity and one of the smallest in terms of size. This is a very good battery as it nears with ease the official numbers which are up to 5.5 hours for GSM and up to 4.5 hours for UMTS in talk time mode and up to 300 hours in standby mode. The battery lasted exactly 4 hours and 5 minutes on a standard use with display brightness set at maximum. That is very reliable as most people are using the device with half brightness that will give you at least another 30 minutes of use.

Impressions Surprisingly the device can be much more useful than a notebook or a laptop. Of course this device doesn't resemble the mobile phones we were used to, but it is surely more than a phone. I reckon that the device offers its maximum capabilities only when you're going on a business trip and that there's no way that you can use it only as a mobile phone. If you are a businessman, this device is the best choice on the market at the

moment. You can acquire HTC X7500 Advantage form Omnisoft's [site](#) for about USD 1350. **The Good**Well, you won't be able to open a can with it or use it as a flash (too much), but this is a device that a businessman should carry whenever he wants to go on a trip. I should present the device as a whole as it features high-end chipsets and technologies. This is simply another well-designed all-purpose tool made by HTC featuring 8 GB Hitachi microdrive, powerful Intel processor, GPS receiver, HSDPA technology, 3 Megapixel camera, big capacity battery, large display and QWERTY keyboard. **The Bad**Again HTC nerfed the multimedia part which offers a mediocre sound for music fans. Other than that, everything is above average and in parameters. **Sales package**Pocket PC2200 mAh Li-Ion batteryStylusExtra stylusChargerStereo wired headset with microphoneCarrying leather case miniUSB cable TV-out VGA cableUser guideCD with software*Photo: Tudor Raiciu for Softpedia.com*