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LG KC550 Front
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[LG KC550 Review](#)

The best value for money camera phone

The mobile division of the Korean giant LG is one of the few handset manufacturers that managed to actually make some profit this year. Basically, the company flooded the market with its mobile devices, so that it could meet as many demands as possible, from high-end users, as well as from mid- and low-end ones. Apart from the fact that the company increased its portfolio with a huge number of new devices, it also started to concentrate in various fields that didn't get too much attention in the past, such as camera phones and multimedia phones, or sometimes both. LG KC550 is a simple device that fully targets users that prefer camera phones. The device features a typical LG slider form, with no innovations, but with a 5 Megapixel camera as the main attraction.

LG KC550 was announced in May 2008, and was made available for buyers in August, same year. LG fans that intend to try the KC550 slider can choose from three different colors: Black, Gray and Pink. The phone is mid-end, so the price you have to pay for it is also medium - around \$270 USD.

Design

There's nothing fancy about LG KC550 in terms of design. It features the same LG slider form that has been specific to all the Korean company's sliders launched in 2007 and 2008. Measuring 96.9 x 51.4 x 14.9 mm, it couldn't be described as it big, but neither as small.

The slider is rather bulky, but LG fans are probably used to this by now, what with the new wave of LG sliders. They all look the same, but feature different specs. Anyway, one of the strong points of LG's handsets, design, stands out once more, since KC550 looks stylish. The black shiny plastic covering the front part of the slider is very well polished, but also a fingerprint magnet. The sleek metallic stripe that frames the phone is also nice, but will soil fast and will need frequent wiping. The back cover is made of a rubber-like compound, nice to the touch and not susceptible to fingerprints.

The slider includes the usual external keys: dual volume keys (also used as zooming keys for camera), microSD slot card and dedicated camera button on the right side. The other side of the handset features the proprietary LG port, which has multiple uses (charge, attach headphones and synchronization with the PC). On top of the phone, there's a small eyelet. Five control keys and a big D-pad are placed on the front bottom part of the slider: Accept/Reject calls keys, 2 contextual keys and C key (Delete). The big D-pad is pretty responsive, and offers above average control functionality to the user. There's no chance of it breaking in time, as the construction looks solid. A small earpiece, enabling users to listen

while they're talking on the phone, is to be found above the 2.4 inches display.

When slid, the phone reveals a generous keypad that features the same chess pattern as the previous LG sliders launched this year - KM500 and KF600. The keypad is also a fingerprint magnet, and doesn't provide too great of an experience to those SMS-ing a lot. The back of the phone is the main attraction, as it features a 5 Megapixel camera under a metallic cover that protects it. You need to slide the cover to the left to be able to take pictures. Near the camera lenses, there's a small flash and a mirror for self-portraits. The only thing placed under the camera is a medium-sized loudspeaker. Overall, LG KC550 is definitely not the ugliest slider made by LG, but it's not going to stand out from the crowd either.

Display and Camera

LG KC550 includes a 2.4-inch TFT display that supports 262k colors and a maximum resolution of 240 x 320 pixels. Unfortunately, it has a very low eligibility under the sunlight, which greatly diminishes its functionality outdoors. The small size of the screen doesn't recommend it for Web browsing either. Protection of the display is non-existent, so it will most likely be full of scratches sooner than you might think. The quality of the images shown on the screen is quite good. In terms of performance, the display doesn't support any kind of 3D graphics or Hardware Accelerated Mobile 3D Graphics functions, so it cannot be tested. Jbenchmark 1.0 and 2.0 results can be seen below, but they aren't that relevant.

Still, the screen can be considered mid-ranged in terms of quality, scoring more on the quality of the image displayed, and in terms of performance. One function that saves appearances is the accelerometer sensor for auto-rotate, which is becoming more common on handsets these days.

The 5 Megapixel camera features Schneider-Kreuznach optics, flash capabilities, autofocus and mirror for self-portraits. It also includes digital image stabilization function and can make pictures with a maximum resolution of 2592 x 1944 pixels.

The interface of the camera is user-friendly, with various settings and functions: Color Effect, White Balance, ISO (800 max.), Shutter tone, and Quality.

The gallery hasn't changed either, but users can benefit from the slide-show function. When displaying a picture on the screen, one can zoom in on it, which is useful for those that want more details. The built-in accelerometer starts up when one is browsing the gallery. The

auto screen rotation makes the pictures turn in landscape mode or full screen, according to one's wishes.

LG KC550 can record movies with a maximum resolution of 720 x 480 pixels at 30fps. Part of the settings and functions from the camera interface are also available for recording: Color Effect, Brightness, flash and White balance. The quality of the pictures is quite good, and can be easily compared with that of LG Viewty. In fact, this is the main reason why one would want to pay for this slider, as everything else is quite common. Take a look at the samples below, since they look more than appealing.

Menu and Software

KC550 slider features the same standard LG interface, with which all users are familiar. It offers quite a bit in terms of customization, but it is also user-friendly and actually appealing. Wallpapers and screensavers support flash animations, which makes the device more attractive. There aren't too many applications and productivity tools included in the phone, but we're not really missing out on anything here, given that the slider's target is those that often use it as a camera. Two themes are also pre-installed and both are taking advantage of the built-in accelerometer.

There's an Organizer containing 2 utilities: Calendar and Memo. In terms of productivity tools, owners will find only the basic versions of the most used applications: Alarm clock, Calculator, Stopwatch, Unit converter and World Clock, as well as Google Search and Google mail applications. The file manager tagged as "My stuff" is one of the downsides of the slider. It can list the folders made by users on the phone's memory, but they won't be able to listen to their music unless the files are copied to the Sounds folder made by default. The same is available for Images and Documents. For those looking for some entertainment, the slider also embeds 2 Java compatible games that are taking advantage of the accelerometer, Extreme Skateboard and Mini Game World.

The phonebook of the slider looks standard, and holds 1,000 contacts. Users will be able to see contacts by Name only, Name & number, or only those With picture. You cannot see only contacts included on the SIM, nor only those from the phone's memory. They are all mixed, but you'll be able to identify those from the SIM as they are marked with a specific sign. Unfortunately, you'll need to click twice before reaching any contact that you intend to call, and this I believe is an unnecessary "feature."

The all-time famous "clock delay" bug has also been corrected, which marks an improvement to the updated firmware. Overall, user-interface is not far from what LG has

already gotten us used to - plus some welcome improvements that should add to its functionality.

Communications

LG KC550 supports GPRS and EDGE connectivity, both class 12. Data transfer speeds are way below average, but it is clear that this handset has not been made for browsing, because of the small screen and lack of 3G connectivity.

In terms of messaging, the slider is compatible with a basic range of messages: SMS (100 max.), MMS, EMS, email and Bluetooth (2.0) messaging.

Moreover, the slider supports Bluetooth 2.0 with A2DP and EDR standards for wireless music listening and fast data transfer.

The embedded browser (WAP 2.0 Teleca) comes with a basic array of settings. Unfortunately, the small screen and the low connection speed (EDGE) limit the Web browsing experience.

The LG PC Suite that comes in the sales package enables users to synchronize their phone with the PC, but the file transfer rate is pretty slow.

The triband (GSM 900 / GSM 1800 / GSM 1900) network compatible slider has a good GSM signal reception. Sound is average, but a little bit muffled.

Processor and Memory

LG KC550 features an AMD Imageon M180 media processor. This CPU is powering the ultra-fast, high-resolution image processing, DVD-quality video and high-definition audio features of the slider. AMD Imageon media processors support a variety of multimedia functions, including mobile TV, video, photography, Internet access, Adobe Flash content, video telephony, music and 3D graphics processing. The power of the CPU can also be noticed when using the built-in accelerometer on the 2.4-inch display.

The phone comes with only 12 MB of internal memory and no microSD card included in the sales package. Still, it can be upgraded through the microSD slot card, up to 4GB.

The low internal memory may be another downside of the phone, as the first thing to do after buying the phone is to get yourself a memory card, which, thankfully, is hot-swappable.

Multimedia

LG KC550 doesn't meet the requirements to be classified as a music phone, so you should pass it if that's what you were looking for. Furthermore, as the device features only the LG proprietary port and no adapter, you'll be stuck with the headset that comes with the phone, which is very low in terms of performance. The Bluetooth 2.0 with A2DP support is nice, but sound quality is way too low in quality, especially when you turn the volume to the max.

The FM radio can only memorize 10 base stations, is only available when the headset is inserted into the LG proprietary, and lacks RDS function. The MP3 player cannot be used in the background, so don't try this, as it's a futile attempt. The interface of the music player is pretty standard, and recognizes almost any type of multimedia file: MP3, WAV, VMA, MIDI, AAC, AAC. There is also a video player that enables users to watch the clips they're playing in landscape (full screen) mode, and Muvee Studio application.

Battery

LG KC550 features a 900 mAh Li-Ion battery, which depletes at an average level, depending on your needs. The official numbers stated by LG - 450 hours of standby mode and 6 hours of talking - are in no way attainable. Usually, I got about 3 days of use, with about 30 minutes of talking everyday. It might last longer, around 4 days, if you only use it for 1-2 short calls per day.

Impressions

Even if LG KC550 looks just like another LG slider, it is also one of the few very good camera phones manufactured by the Korean company. We might as well get used with the new wave of LG handsets that are targeting niche areas. LG KC550 is all about the camera and nothing else, so bear in mind that you won't be able to listen to music, or use the device as a business tool. All in all, the slider is one of the few in its price range to feature such a good camera, so it's one of the best choices in terms of value for money.

The Good

The 5 Megapixel camera is by far the main attraction of the phone, alas the only one. One could also enlist the built-in accelerometer among the positive things, but this is functional in only a few areas of the device.

The Bad

The multimedia part is very poorly represented, as in, "almost inexistent." Crappy sound and no RDS for the radio, as well as the fact that it cannot be ran in the background, place

the phone outside the area of interest of music lovers. Lack of 3G connectivity, as well as very low performance when making data transfers, is another downside of the slider.

Sales package

LG KC550 handset

Battery Li-Ion 900 mAh

Charger 230V/EU

Wired headset

USB Cable

CD ROM with LG PC Suite