



Dynamically enhanced

★★★★☆ Lenovo Thinkpad T61 (766515M)

A strong performer with a rugged design, the Lenovo ThinkPad T61 is a solid machine and it represents the next generation of business notebooks based on Intel's latest Centrino platform codenamed Santa Rosa.

Lenovo has bundled in some of the latest gear, including an NVIDIA 8M-GS graphics chip and some perks from Intel's new Santa Rosa Centrino Duo platform. At its heart is an Intel Core 2 Duo T7300 2GHz CPU with an 800MHz front side bus (FSB), but the Wi-Fi is only 802.11a/b/g, not draft-n. As it's not a Centrino Pro notebook, it also lacks the Active Management technology.

On top of all that, Lenovo has toughened up this notebook by adding another roll cage into the design. The hard drive roll cage has been in the ThinkPad range for some time and now also includes a roll cage for the top cover to reinforce the display and, according to Lenovo, improve the performance of its wireless connectivity by reducing LCD noise and eliminating the need for external antennas. Indeed, the 14.1in screen seems very secure, exhibiting no stress or distortion when pressure is applied to its back.

The new CPUs from Intel, including the T7300 in the ThinkPad T61, all include some power-saving and performance-boosting features. One feature is called Enhanced Dynamic Acceleration, which will power down one core of the CPU when it's not needed, and use some of the power saved to boost the still-active core, giving it more speed. Also, the FSB has been increased from 667MHz to 800MHz, providing more bandwidth and faster communication between the CPU, memory and chipset.

In WorldBench 6, our Windows Vista-based



benchmarking software, the Lenovo ThinkPad T61 scored a total of 70. This is a nice score for a business notebook and shows it can handle its own when it comes to applications like Firefox 2, Microsoft Office and Adobe Photoshop.

It also did reasonably well in our worst-case scenario battery test.

In this test, the Lenovo ThinkPad T61 lasted for 100 minutes. The DVD drive can also be hot-plugged, meaning it can be taken out while the machine is on, and replaced with an extra battery for extended life.

Thanks to the increased FSB, the CPU now has more room to push data around at higher speeds. This means two CPU's with identical frequencies, one with an 800MHz FSB and one with a 667MHz FSB will actually perform differently. We did an MP3 encoding test to see how well the 2GHz CPU with an 800MHz FSB ran. It took the Lenovo T61 133 seconds to complete this task.

With a resolution of 1280x800, the screen is sharp and has good contrast levels, though it is just a little dark. The keyboard is comfortable to type on and includes volume controls and a ThinkVantage shortcut button. Touchpad and track-point users have both been considered, as the T61 includes one of each. You'll also find a fingerprint scanner for added security.

The Final Word: The Lenovo ThinkPad T61 is a solid machine with a good deal of power under the hood and will keep things running smooth under most conditions. Although it lacks the draft-n Wi-Fi connectivity, it still boasts the speed of the new Santa Rosa platform.

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