



Gigabyte P25

£1,300 | \$1,500 www.gigabyte.com

A solid gaming laptop that's less expensive than most

The P25 is the new bread and butter in Gigabyte's range of gaming portables, cutting a nice line between the larger 17-inch laptops and their slimline Ultrabook counterparts. Whereas those laptops make compromises in order to provide a larger screen or better portability, the P25 caters mainly for gamers who want maximum performance, without having to lug an unnecessarily large chassis around with them.

Mind you, at 2.8kg, the P25 isn't exactly what we'd call lightweight. Nor is it particularly slim, but if you want decent graphics capabilities, something has to give. Thankfully, Gigabyte has done a decent job of reining things in and making the most of every inch of space.

Most of the competition in the gaming arena is from 17-inch laptops. The P25 has a 15.6-inch screen, which puts it at a bit of a disadvantage, but makes it much more portable. It'll fit in a bag with a 15-inch laptop pocket with a little gentle persuasion.

No frills

Although this is a gaming PC, Gigabyte hasn't gone over the top with flashy additions that have no real bearing on performance. Okay, the back of the screen is a little garish, and the fan vents at the rear have been designed to mimic the exhaust tail pipes of a supercar, but you can choose to have it clad in plain black, and elsewhere the P25 is quite minimalist. It's a solid thing, that's for sure, though it does feel a tiny bit cheap in places.

Instead of spending time on the aesthetics, Gigabyte has included some top-of-the-line components to keep gamers happy, including a new generation Intel processor, as well as a storming graphics card from Nvidia. The Gigabyte P25 houses Intel's Core i7 4700MQ chip. It's very powerful, and because it's based on Intel's fourth-generation

technology, it consumes less power than its predecessor, resulting in improved battery life.

The 4700MQ isn't the top of the range – there are several higher-performing chips above it – but it offers great value for money. Anything else would have raised the laptop's price much higher.

The Nvidia GeForce GTX 770M graphics aren't the top of the line either, but that kind of power costs a lot more, too. Nevertheless, the 770M delivers the goods in terms of performance, and equivalent gaming notebooks, such as the MSI GS70, make do with a GTX765M card. The Asus G750JX offers almost identical performance for a similar price, but it lacks the Gigabyte's super-responsive SSD and is a much heavier laptop (part of which is down to the bigger screen).

The 8GB of memory is good (though not uncommon at this level), but it's the triple-storage solution that's really worth highlighting. The model we tested came with just a 128GB SSD, but Gigabyte lets you customise your storage setup. You can keep it simple with a single SSD and a conventional HDD (up to 1TB), or you can add two SSDs (up to 512GB each – that's 1TB in total). This is a great idea if you're not sure what you want right now, or you simply can't afford a second SSD. The hard drive option means you have somewhere to deposit your files without adding an external drive to complement your main unit.

If that's not enough, the P25 also comes with a Blu-ray drive which supports the writing and rewriting of discs, which gives you yet another option for backing up your files. The Blu-ray drive – naturally – allows you to watch HD movies, and the Dolby Home Theatre v4's Movie setting is designed to create a pseudo-surround-sound effect. It certainly gives the audio a boost for films, but, even with the levels

fine-tuned in the advanced options, it's hard to improve the somewhat flat tone of the speakers.

Keyboard warrior

The P25's keyboard features adjustable backlighting for night-time gaming. Unlike other gaming laptops, such as the MSI GS70, which go all-out to give you a completely customised setup, the P25 is a much more subdued affair. As is traditional in the world of gaming, Gigabyte has isolated the [W], [S], [A] and [D] keys to give gamers immediate access to the controls they need most.

We found the P25 quite nice to type on, with just the right amount of feedback – slightly spongy and not too shallow a travel. It makes long bouts of typing easy, with no mis-registered keystrokes. It also has a keypad, which is handy if you're working on spreadsheets frequently. The trackpad is nice and spacious too, but we occasionally found it a little on the sensitive side, and the left and right buttons need to be pressed right on the edge, otherwise they won't register.

The P25 comes with an array of connections, including two USB 3.0 ports, HDMI, an SD card reader, D-sub and a handy eSATA/USB combo port. A Kensington lock rounds things off nicely, enabling you to tether the laptop to a desk if you feel the need.

Although gaming laptops are never really intended to be left unplugged from a mains charger for long, the P25 surprised us in the mobile stakes with an entirely commendable 154 minutes of battery life, helped no doubt by its excellent processor.

Noisy breathing

When the P25 needs a lick of speed, the dual rear fans kick in and you can really feel a rush of air coming from the back vents. It's certainly no church mouse – this thing really makes a lot of noise. You'll need a good pair of headphones to keep out the racket, otherwise you might end up with a headache.



Unfortunately, while the speakers are loud enough to smother the fans, they're pretty much devoid of any sort of charm. There are no fancy audio effects gracing the P25's specification sheet.

In this day and age we'd expect to find an IPS screen, but although Gigabyte's less-gaming-focused P35 model includes such a display for richer colours and less reflection in most lighting situations, the P25 makes do with a slightly cheaper matte LED display. Some gamers prefer this, but most manufacturers have moved to IPS, making it an odd choice. It doesn't quite have the zing of an IPS and has a distinct 'gravelly' appearance, but its viewing angles are fine.

Overall, we were impressed with the Gigabyte P25. It won't blow you away in terms of performance, but it's enough to play the majority of new games at high settings thanks to the excellent Core i7 processor and 8GB of RAM. If you're after a gaming PC but your budget won't stretch to the likes of the MSI GX60, the P25 is definitely worth a look. ■

A surprisingly powerful gaming laptop for the money, with great components in a stylish chassis.



Windows 7
Help & Advice
Verdict

★★★★★

KEY FEATURES

Gigabyte P25

Supplier www.gigabyte.com
Operating system Windows 8.1 Pro
Processor Quad-core Intel Core i7 4700MQ 2.4GHz
Storage 128GB SSD
RAM 8GB
Graphics Nvidia GeForce GTX 770M GDDR5 3GB
Connectivity 802.11b/g/n Wi-Fi, Bluetooth 4.0, USB 3.0
Weight 2.8kg
Screen size 15.6-inch
Display resolution 1,920 x 1,080 Full HD



