

# iPhone 16 Pro vs Pixel 9 Pro Camera Comparison

The iPhone 16 Pro and Pixel 9 Pro are among the best smartphones on the market. Both offer top-notch performance and plenty of AI features, but how do their cameras compare in real-world use?

Both devices were tested in a variety of conditions to see which camera really shines.

## Take a close look at each device's camera hardware



Before we get to the photos, let's take a look at each phone's camera hardware. As you'd expect from Apple and Google's flagships, the iPhone 16 Pro and Pixel 9 Pro both come with top-of-the-line camera systems.

The iPhone 16 Pro has a 48MP main camera with an f/1.8 aperture, along with features like dual-pixel Phase Detection Auto-Focus (PDAF) and sensor-shift OIS. The main camera is accompanied by a 12MP 5x optical zoom telephoto lens and a new 48MP ultra-wide-angle camera. Apple also includes a LiDAR sensor next to the camera module for depth sensing.

On the Pixel 9 Pro, you'll find a 50MP main camera with an f/1.7 aperture, dual-pixel PDAF, and sensor-shift OIS. Similar to the iPhone 16 Pro, the Pixel 9 Pro also offers a 5x optical telephoto zoom lens, albeit with a higher resolution at 48MP. There's also a 48MP ultra-wide lens with a 123-degree field of view (FoV).

## Camera comparison rules

Before we go any further, here are a few things to note. This comparison focuses solely on the rear cameras on these phones, not the selfie cameras. Also, all of the photos in this test were taken using a simple shooting method—no exposure, white balance, or Pro mode settings—because the goal is to simulate how most people

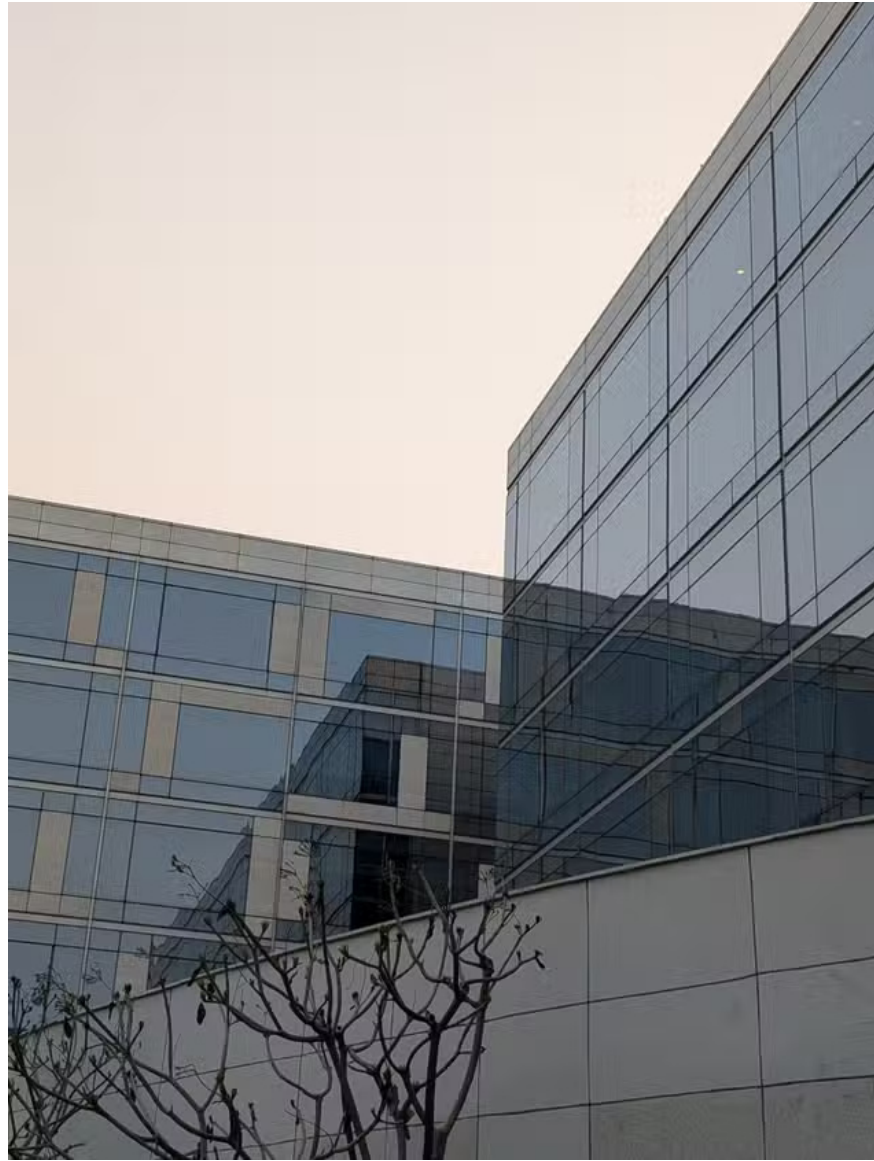
typically use their smartphones.

For iPhone 16 Pro, Photographic Styles or the new Camera Control button were not used for this test to ensure fair and consistent comparisons.

In the image gallery below, you'll see the photo from the iPhone 16 Pro shown first (left) and the photo from the Google Pixel 9 Pro shown second (right), making it easy to compare the results side by side.

## **Daytime photography**





Let's start with this photo of two buildings with glass windows. It's clear that the iPhone 16 Pro favors warmer tones, giving the scene a softer, more realistic feel. In contrast, the Pixel 9 Pro uses cooler tones, giving it a slightly duller, less vibrant look.

The iPhone 16 Pro also handles the sky better, capturing smooth color transitions, while the Pixel 9 Pro struggles to achieve the same level of detail and nuance.





The iPhone 16 Pro continues the warmer tones in the photo of the red train, giving it a clean and balanced look. The red paint on the train looks rich and authentic, while the yellow accents are detailed without being too bright. However, the trees in the background seem a little dark, losing a bit of their vitality.

The Pixel 9 Pro, on the other hand, takes a more subdued approach. The red paint job looks a bit duller than the iPhone's, favoring a more natural tone, while the yellow accents are handled better. By comparison, the Pixel 9 Pro's background is more prominent, with the trees and parked cars looking more defined.





This photo, taken in dim daylight outside a Starbucks in New Delhi, India, highlights the contrasting HDR processing styles of the two phones. The iPhone 16 Pro tends toward darker tones, with deeper shadows, especially under the umbrellas. While the sky looks warmer and softer, it also looks a little washed out. The darker processing affects the umbrellas, making them a less accurate green than the Pixel 9 Pro.

The Pixel 9 Pro, on the other hand, emphasizes clarity and brightness. It brings out more detail in shaded areas, like under umbrellas and along tiled floors. It also gives the sky a cooler tone, creating a more balanced feel between highlights and shadows. It also makes elements like the palm trees and cars in the background more defined without looking over-processed.

In low light, the Pixel 9 Pro handles HDR significantly better than the iPhone 16 Pro.



Despite the foggy day and poor air quality, this photo still highlights the distinct color advantages of the two phones.

The iPhone 16 Pro retains a warmer tone, giving the grass a slightly more vibrant look than the Pixel. But the shadows, especially around trees and under benches, are poorly rendered. This reduces the sense of depth in the image, limiting visibility in dark areas. The orange sign looks bold and vibrant, although the overall tone of the image tends to be softer and less crisp.

The Pixel 9 Pro produces brighter and sharper results, with cooler tones that bring out the green in the grass and trees. The shadows are less pronounced than on the iPhone 16 Pro. While the orange sign on the Pixel 9 Pro looks more saturated and vibrant than the iPhone 16 Pro, the overall image still handles much better in terms of clarity and vibrancy.

## 5x zoom test



Next, let's look at photos taken with the telephoto lens on both phones at 5x optical zoom. You'll immediately notice the difference between the two photos.

The iPhone 16 Pro's shots tend to be softer, likely due to the lower megapixel sensor and the emphasis on a slightly wider depth of field. Colors retain the iPhone's signature warm tones with a bit of vibrancy, but lose some of the subtle detail in the shadows.

The Pixel 9 Pro produces sharper, more detailed images with impressive color accuracy. It clearly does a better job of isolating subjects than the iPhone 16 Pro. Not only that, but it also brings out vivid colors and sharp

textures more effectively, especially in the design of the mug.





The limitations of the iPhone 16 Pro's lower-megapixel telephoto lens are apparent in this comparison shot of a staircase. At 5x zoom, the iPhone captures a softer image while smaller details, like the texture of the trees and railings, lack sharpness. In contrast, the Pixel 9 Pro's shot produces a slightly sharper image.

## **Portrait**





Both the iPhone 16 Pro and Pixel 9 Pro take great portrait photos, but differ in style and processing. The iPhone goes for natural skin tones with balanced colors (again with a touch of warmth) and smoother background blur. Meanwhile, the Pixel goes for a dramatic look, with cooler skin tones and stronger bokeh for better subject isolation.

## **Indoor/artificial lighting**





Indoor lighting shots turned out to be surprisingly inconsistent across both the iPhone 16 Pro and Pixel 9 Pro. In the snaps above, the iPhone 16 Pro went for a cooler tone, producing a great photo with impressive detail, clarity, and very little lens flare. However, the shallow depth of field makes the wood paneling in the background a little soft and lacking in sharpness.

The Pixel 9 Pro, on the other hand, struggled with this scene, producing uneven warm tones and noticeable glare around the light bulbs. However, it did a great job capturing the wood paneling, even in harsh indoor lighting conditions.



However, the roles are reversed in the yellow staircase photo. Here, the iPhone 16 Pro opts for a warmer tone, resulting in a vibrant image, but the photo has an overly yellow cast. Meanwhile, the Pixel 9 Pro handles HDR and color extremely well, creating a balanced and accurate scene.

## **Ultra wide angle lens**





Finally, when comparing photos taken with the ultra-wide lens, the iPhone 16 Pro retains a warmer tone, resulting in a bright image with excellent detail. The lines on the wall in the foreground are clearly defined and the greenery is beautifully rendered, adding to the overall appeal of the photo.

In contrast, the Pixel 9 Pro's ultra-wide-angle shot appears a bit darker, reducing the overall vibrancy and impact of the image.

## **Does the iPhone 16 Pro or Pixel 9 Pro have a better camera?**

Overall, it's hard to say which camera is better than the other, as the iPhone 16 Pro and Pixel 9 Pro both excel in different situations. However, the differences in their approaches are evident in the photos above. The iPhone 16 Pro consistently favors warmer tones and more vibrant images, while the Pixel 9 Pro favors cooler, neutral tones with a slightly more muted look.

In terms of HDR performance, the Pixel 9 Pro arguably has the edge, especially in handling shadows. However, the iPhone 16 Pro's color technology seems more appealing overall, delivering eye-catching images even if it sacrifices some accuracy in the process.

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