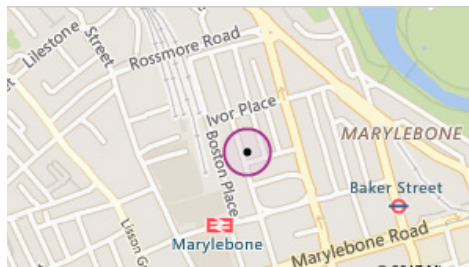


The meeting on Monday 9th October 2017 will be downstairs at the Sir John Balcombe London NW1 6HE

The meet-up on Monday 9 October 2017 will be downstairs from 7pm at the Sir John Balcome Pub: 21 Balcombe Street, London NW1 6HE

This month we'll have a NewsByte Special to review the announcements from Apple's Special Event in September and Apple's new operating systems Mac OS 13, iOS 11 and Watch OS 4.

Our Raffle Prize this month will be a SanDisk Ultra USB Type-C memory stick. 128GB of storage in a memory stick with both a normal and USB-C connector (for new MacBooks)!



Members Only Special Offers

Current special offers

Sparkle website builder: 20% Discount
TechTool Pro 9.5: 20% Discount
AgileBits 1Password 6: 25% Discount
Boom 2 Volume Booster (Mac): 50% Discount
Take Control Books: 30% Discount
Joe On Tech Guides: 20% Discount on All Books
Teams ID, a Password Manager for Teams: 33% lifetime Discount
EverWeb by RAGE Software: 50% Discount
Eltima Software: Up to 60% Off OS X Apps
Noteboom Tutorials: 33% Off Annual Memberships
Prosoft Engineering: 25% Discount
Que Publishing Products: 35-45% Discount
SlideShark iPad PowerPoint Viewer: Free App plus Special Offer
Opus][Complete Collection: 25% Discount



or?



macOS 10.13 High Sierra Now Available; When Should You Upgrade?

Apple has now released macOS 10.13 High Sierra via the Mac App Store for all Macs running OS X 10.8 Mountain Lion and later. As we noted at the very start of our WWDC coverage in “Tripping to macOS 10.13 High Sierra” (5 June 2017), High Sierra is one of Apple’s smaller upgrades in the recent “tick, tock” of operating systems, including Leopard/Snow Leopard, Lion/Mountain Lion, Yosemite/El Capitan, and now Sierra/High Sierra.

Image

However, as much as High Sierra has relatively few user-facing changes and new features, Apple is using the release to make some huge updates under the hood. High Sierra automatically converts Macs with SSDs to the new APFS file system (see “What Apple’s Forthcoming APFS File System Means to You,” 24 June 2016) and uses the new HEVC and HEIF formats for videos and photos (see “HEVC and HEIF Will Make Video and Photos More Efficient,” 30 June 2017). These infrastructural changes should modernize the Mac’s underpinnings, improve performance, reduce storage needs, and pave the way for future improvements.

The significance of those changes raises the question: when should you upgrade your Mac to High Sierra? With iOS, and even more so with watchOS and tvOS, we generally trust Apple enough to upgrade quickly, in large part because the company exercises such control over those operating systems that they can’t vary much. Plus, frankly, problems with an Apple Watch or Apple TV aren’t likely to impact your life much.

On a Mac, though, there are innumerable opportunities to stray from the straight and narrow, and many users do. If developers follow Apple’s rules, and if Apple did its due diligence during beta testing, there should be no problem with upgrading to High Sierra. But there’s no way to know if the hardware and software on your Mac meet Apple’s specs, or if Apple was able to test your particular configuration. That doesn’t mean anyone failed to do their jobs right; it’s just a fact. Add that to the fact that many of us rely heavily on our Macs to get our jobs done, and the upgrade question becomes all the more important.

Happily, if you follow Joe Kissell’s advice in “Take Control of Upgrading to High Sierra” and make a bootable duplicate right before upgrading, you have nothing to lose except perhaps time. That’s

because, in the worst case scenario, you can always reformat your Mac’s boot drive and restore from your bootable duplicate. Joe has released the 1.1 version of his book now, and it includes instructions for downgrading if necessary.

That said, there’s no harm in waiting, and High Sierra doesn’t have so many features as to make the upgrade immediately compelling (for an in-depth guide to what’s new, and much more, see Scholle McFarland’s “Take Control of High Sierra”). If you fall into one of three main groups of users, we recommend holding off on High Sierra for at least a few weeks, or until 10.13.1 comes out with the usual bevy of bug fixes:

If you can’t spare the time to deal with unanticipated problems. That’s true if you’re upgrading your own Mac or if you’re upgrading the Macs of users who you support (see “Important High Sierra Changes for IT Admins,” 11 September 2017).

If you’re uncomfortable with the tasks involved with downgrading despite Joe’s advice.

If some piece of software you rely on is incompatible with High Sierra. Developers are releasing updates, but older versions of apps may experience problems.

Users of one particular class of software should delay upgrades: those who rely on disk utilities that haven’t yet been upgraded to be compatible with APFS. You really don’t want to let an old disk utility touch an APFS-formatted drive. That could also be true of backup software. Although the developers of Carbon Copy Cloner and Mac Backup Guru have said that they’re ready for APFS, the developers behind SuperDuper have expressed more worry due to minimal documentation from Apple (nonetheless, SuperDuper 3.0B1 is available for testing).

If you do upgrade to High Sierra, make sure to maintain a Time Machine backup, since Apple has undoubtedly used its internal knowledge about APFS to update Time Machine as necessary. Up-to-date backups protect you from a multitude of evils.

Now, despite these words of caution, if you’ll excuse me, I need to finish going through Joe’s checklists so I can upgrade my main iMac!

Speccking up the MacBook or choosing a faster MacBook Pro

Last week a photographer friend asked my advice on buying a new MacBook. Which of the options should he go for and, fundamentally, would the MacBook be ok for photo processing. I explained that the new range of MacBooks makes a near-perfect travel computer in terms of size and weight. And for occasional photographic processing the MacBook is up to the job. But for regular demanding tasks involving lots of Lightroom work or, worse, 4K video processing, a carefully-specified MacBook Pro is definitely a better choice.

I still use my original MacBook, the first of its breed, which I purchased exactly two years ago. I am still happy with it, although I haven't been doing as much travelling recently as I did in the past. It seems that I have had it longer until I checked; but two years these days is a long time in technology, if slightly longer than a week in politics. It is already slow and outdated, but even this original model still copes adequately with occasional processing — certainly enough to handle my travel requirements. If I were a professional photographer or a more frequent traveller I would certainly have upgraded to a MacBook Pro before now.

But if my two-year-old 12in MacBook is now barely adequate, a new version of the same computer is going to be a lot faster, especially if it is upgraded from the standard specification. Unfortunately, with a top spec, the MacBook is no longer a cheap option and compares unfavourably with the much faster and more capable 13in MacBook Pro. Where it does beat the Pro hands down is on size and weight; if these are of paramount importance the MacBook could be the right choice.

When I bought my MacBook in 2015 I took the highest specification I could get and paid £1,300; that's probably the one reason I've been happy with it for two whole years. If I'd taken the cheapskate route and chosen the basic model (which, in the new version, today costs £1,249) I think I could well have been disappointed.

One thing I couldn't upgrade at the time, though, was the amount of internal memory. RAM topped out at 8GB on those earlier models and that was a disappointment. The best investment for added performance is not a slightly faster processor but more RAM. These days I wouldn't buy a Mac with only 8GB of memory; 16GB is my minimum and I'd go for 32Gb or even 64Gb given

the chance. More RAM means less memory swapping and speedier processing, especially on heavy duty applications such as those handling video processing.

MacBook Spec

So would I still recommend the MacBook? The answer is a resounding yes, provided you buy it for the right reasons. You must need to travel often with the MacBook to make the weight saving worthwhile. If you are carting your laptop around infrequently, then a heavier MacBook Pro is a better bet. If you never move your laptop from the office or home desk, then don't buy the MacBook. Go for the better value and faster processing in an iMac or, even, a 15in MacBook Pro.

If you do decide to go with the MacBook and wish to use it for occasional heavy duty processing, then make sure you don't just walk into an Apple store and choose one of the standard models. Order from the Apple web site and get your made-to-order specification of choice. It doesn't usually take more than a few extra days and you can still return it to a local store within two weeks and get your money back if you decide you've made a mistake (or wish to swap it for a Pro model).

"It's a lot, but better shell out a bit more at the outset than end up dissatisfied after twelve months."

What specification? I always believe in choosing a high spec because I know full well that in a year's time even this speedy version will be lagging behind newer models. The more capable the version you buy at the outset, the longer are you likely to be happy with your purchase. It works out cheaper in the end.

I'd take the faster of the two base models, starting with the 1.3GHz dual-core i5, but bump up the processor to the 1.4GHz Core i7 processor with turbo-boost to 3.6GHz. That's an additional cost of £135 and well worth it. It's also essential to upgrade the memory from the standard 8GB to 16GB — as much as you can get with the MacBook. That adds another £180 (but worth it even more so than the processor upgrade), to bring the grand total to £1,864, including tax. It's a lot, but better shell out a bit more at the outset than end up dissatisfied after twelve months.

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**SoundByte is the newsletter of the London Mac User Group.
It is produced solely by, and for, LMUG members.
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For this you are getting a great little computer. I love it. I don't mind the single USB-C port and treat it as a dock connector. I'm a bit contrary in this respect but I like the idea of having a desktop dock with all the necessary ports, including power input, so there is just one cable to plug into the portable. A computer with more ports, such as the MacBook Pro line, end up with an untidy gaggle of cables cluttering the desk.

MacBook Pro spec

The sweet-spot 13in MacBook Pro is the one with 2.3GHz Intel Core i5 processor but without Touch Bar (an innovation that hasn't been universally acclaimed and is something you can probably do without). The base price of this computer is £1,449 but even in this form it is faster than the all bells-and-whistles MacBook. While it is confusing, Core i5 and Core i7 processors in the MacBook and MacBook Pro ranges are not the same. In the MacBook they are the slower, low-power mobile processors whereas with the MacBook Pro you get the heavy duty version.

"That's just £44 cheaper than the specced-up MacBook but it buys a much faster and more capable computer."

However, I would find it necessary to increase the RAM to 16GB (as with the MacBook) and the hard-disk storage to 512GB (which is standard on the higher-specified MacBook mentioned above) to bring the total to £1,829. That's just £44 cheaper than the specced-up MacBook but it buys a much faster and more capable computer. Of course, if you want even more processing power and

storage it's just a matter of cash; it won't make the computer any heavier:

The much more powerful MacBook Pro — here with the optional Touch Bar which adds a lot to the price — is a better bet for intensive processing and costs little more than a specced-up MacBook. But you lose out on ultimate portability. It's a lot of extra weight to carry around

The MacBook Pro has other advantages, including more ports (which don't much impress me, see my comments above on treating a USB-C connector as docking medium) and a larger screen with better resolution. Its primary disadvantage vis-a-vis the MacBook is size (it is a uniform 1.49cm high compared with the MacBook (which tapers from 0.35 to 1.31cm) and weight (1.37kg, 3.02lb against the MacBook's 0.92kg, 2.03lb). But make no mistake, while that difference may not look much on paper, it's a different matter when running through the airport with your bag over your shoulder. Then you might wish you'd bought the little MacBook.

As always, with Apple, you pay your money and you take your choice. Yet it can be fiendishly difficult to decide between different model ranges such as the MacBook and MacBook Pro. Incidentally, I'd discount the MacBook Air at the moment because it is neither fish nor fowl and I think you will be better served by the main options outlined in this article.

All the articles on this page come from Michael Evans www.macfilos.com. These and many others are well worth reading.