

# Google Nexus 5: three-month review

After some time with Google's flagship smartphone, Graham Morrison reaches a conclusion on whether it's worth the upgrade.

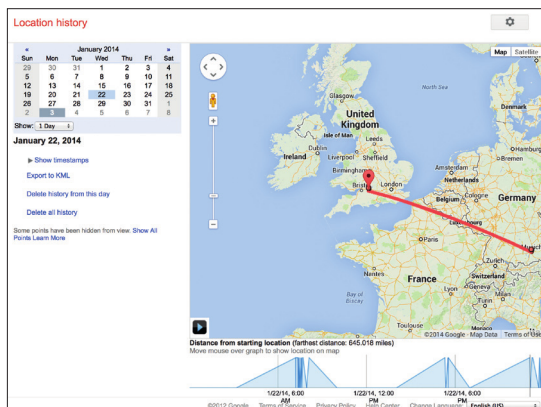
A couple of us on the team have a Nexus 5. On paper, when value is a consideration, it's the best phone you can buy, and will likely stay as Google's flagship device for some time yet. But price/specification comparisons don't tell you the whole story. You have to spend time with a device to be able to say whether it's really a successful product. Which is exactly what we've done, reporting our findings on whether the Nexus 5 is still the go-to phone for Linux-loving smartphone users.

After a flaky start, Android has become a wonderful operating system. When notifications appear in the top-left of the display, they're subtle, functional and easily swiped away. With a few choice applications, such as 'Status Agenda' for adding appointments to the notification area, a replacement launcher or a better text messaging application app than the default (the awful Google Hangouts) you can build an environment that works best for you, which is something that can't be said about Apple's iOS.

## Hardware

The hardware is fantastic. After three months' daily use without a case, the screen is still unblemished. Nor have we noticed any problems being understood through the diminutive microphone grille – which some users have complained about.

Speaker output is quite low for hands-free, and the quality of audio recording is about only average – it's legible, but it's not crystal clear. The headphone outputs are also on the low side, although subjective audio quality is excellent. And the camera was vastly improved by an Android update. The screen, as it was in the beginning, is stunning, but the auto-brightness setting can be hit and miss. With average use, our phones last us about 40 hours without a charge, which is perfectly usable.




If you want to scare yourself, take a look at the location history for your account. Google is watching you.



Even though the screen on the Nexus 5 is larger, the phone feels thinner and lighter than the Nexus 4.

We do have problems with some aspects of Android, and by far our biggest is with its unrelenting appetite for personal data. Google Now begs you to turn on browsing history, and refuses to unlock its best features until you do. Every time you open your photos you're pleaded with to enable online backup. Many things seems enabled until you turn them off, and you only have to look at your Google location history to get a terrifying snapshot of where you've physically been, helpfully logged by your phone even if it's just down the road to get some milk.

We're uncomfortable with this, which is why Cyanogenmod may be our best option. Cyanogenmod is Android with the Google cloud services taken out. Similarly, the F-Droid repository seems to be going from strength to strength, and it's become an essential resource for open source apps and utilities. The OwnCloud app, for example, automatically uploads photos to your server, and is particularly helpful, as are the terminal and SSH clients. We still don't like SMS and chat integration, but a small SMS icon now tells you whether you're chatting on your mobile network. Fortunately, you can download the previous version of Messaging through Google Play, thanks to again to Cyanogenmod.

Not withstanding privacy issues, the ability to customise nearly every aspect of your phone's operating system will appeal greatly to the average Linux user. And we can't argue with that. 

## LINUX VOICE VERDICT

A wonderful phone made even more wonderful by the availability of Cyanogenmod.



## DATA

**Web**  
[www.google.co.uk/nexus/5](http://www.google.co.uk/nexus/5)  
**Manufacturer**  
 LG  
**Price**  
 £299 for 16GB version;  
 £339 for 32GB