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October 2026

Dell XPS 14

Better Battery Life, More Performance, and Quieter Fans

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Commissioned by:

DELL Technologies

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The Dell XPS 14



After a brief absence in 2025, Dell relaunched the XPS brand at CES 2026 to a very positive reception. The return of Dell's high-end laptop line coincided with the release of Intel's Core Ultra Series 3 processors, built on the Panther Lake architecture, which powers every 2026 XPS 14 model. The XPS 14 we are evaluating in this Signal65 Lab Insights report is the mid-size product in the line, and the one most likely to be carried everywhere.

The XPS 14 is a premium 14-inch consumer laptop built around a thin and light chassis, a choice of 2.8K OLED touch or 2K LCD display, and a choice of five Intel Core Ultra Series 3 processors, from the Core Ultra 5 325 up to the Core Ultra X9 388H. We tested the two Core Ultra X processors, the X7 358H and the X9 388H, each with 16 cores, Arc B390 graphics, and an integrated NPU. The configurations we tested have 32 GB of LPDDR5X-9600 memory and a 1 TB SSD, three Thunderbolt 4 ports and a universal audio jack, and a chassis that weighs 3.00 lb (1.36 kg) and measures 14.62 mm (0.58 in) at its thickest point with the OLED display and 15.20 mm (0.60 in) with the LCD.

Dell tuned the XPS 14 for the way a 14-inch laptop is used, off the charger, in the power mode it shipped in, moving between rooms and meetings. Peak processor wattage is one number on a specification sheet, and the user experience is what this report attempts to measure. Signal65 tested three XPS 14 configurations against a leading 14-inch competitor with the same Core Ultra X9 388H, the same memory capacity, and the same graphics, so the differences in the results come from OEM and platform engineering rather than from the chip. Because the XPS 14 is sold in several configurations, this report also measures what the display and processor choices cost and return.

Key Findings:

- On battery in the default Balanced mode, the XPS 14 with the Core Ultra X9 388H was **18% faster** in Procyon Office, **14% to 24% faster** in the browser, and 28% faster single-threaded than a leading 14-inch competitor with the same processor.
- Unplugging cost the XPS 14 1% to 4% of its performance in Essentials and the web tests. The competitor gave up 13% to 19%, and 30% in Office and single-threaded work.
- The XPS 14 X7 358H with the LCD display ran **27 hours 40 minutes** of Office productivity, **64% longer** than the competitor on a smaller battery, and was still 7% to 17% faster than the competitor on battery.
- On the same processor, the LCD display delivered **70% more** Office runtime than the OLED with performance within 5%, and the Core Ultra X9 388H added **4% to 7%** over the X7 358H in every workload.
- Every XPS 14 configuration led the competitor by **8% to 17%** in 3DMark Steel Nomad Light on the same Arc B390 graphics.
- Under a sustained all-core load in the Best Performance mode, the XPS 14 keyboard deck peaked **2.5 to 4.6 degrees Celsius cooler** than the competitor and kept the heat out of the keys, at the same fan noise level.
- The competitor's OLED runs longer in a rundown by giving up 30% of its CPU performance on battery. Dell kept the performance the user feels, and the LCD configuration delivers the longest battery life we tested without giving up any of that performance.

Systems and Methodology

We tested four retail 14-inch laptops, three Dell XPS 14 configurations (model DA14260) and one competitor. The XPS 14 configurations are the Core Ultra X9 388H with the 2.8K OLED touch display, the Core Ultra X7 358H with the same OLED display, and the Core Ultra X7 358H with the 2K LCD display, each with 32 GB of LPDDR5X-9600 memory, Arc B390 graphics, and a 68.6 Wh battery. The XPS 14 is also offered with the Core Ultra 5 325, Core Ultra 7 355, and Core Ultra 7 366H, which were not part of this testing. The competitor is the HP OmniBook Ultra 14, configured with the Core Ultra X9 388H, 32 GB of LPDDR5X-8533 memory, Arc B390 graphics, a 2.8K OLED touch display, and a 70.8 Wh battery, which gives it 3% more battery capacity than the XPS 14. All four systems ran Windows 11 25H2 (build 26200.9168) with the same benchmark versions, and all were updated through the Windows Update channel before testing.

Each benchmark was run in each of six power configurations, the Windows Balanced, Best Performance, and Best Power Efficiency power modes, each on AC power and on battery. Battery rundowns were run in the Best Power Efficiency mode on battery with the display set to 200 nits, in three scenarios, the UL Procyon Office Productivity battery test, a Signal65-designed Chrome web browsing rundown, and local 1080p video playback. Where this report compares the XPS 14 to the competitor on the same processor, the comparison uses the Core Ultra X9 388H configuration unless the text says otherwise. Every chart names the configuration, the power mode, and the power source it was captured in.

The workloads cover productivity (UL Procyon Office Productivity and Essentials), web (JetStream 3, Speedometer 3.1, and WebXPRT 5 in Chrome), CPU rendering (Cinebench 2026), general CPU performance (Geekbench 7), graphics (3DMark Steel Nomad Light), and creative applications (PugetBench for Photoshop and Premiere Pro).

Acoustic measurements were taken at the seated user position in the Balanced and Best Performance modes, and surface temperatures were captured with a thermal camera at idle and under sustained load in both modes.

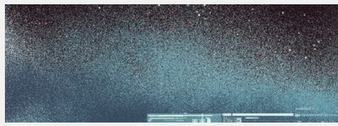
	XPS 14, X9 388H OLED	XPS 14, X7 358H OLED	XPS 14, X7 358H LCD	Competitor
Processor	Core Ultra X9 388H	Core Ultra X7 358H	Core Ultra X7 358H	Core Ultra X9 388H
Graphics	Arc B390	Arc B390	Arc B390	Arc B390
Memory	32 GB LPDDR5X-9600	32 GB LPDDR5X-9600	32 GB LPDDR5X-9600	32 GB LPDDR5X-8533
Display	14-inch 2.8K (2880 x 1800) OLED touch, 20 to 120 Hz variable refresh	14-inch 2.8K (2880 x 1800) OLED touch, 20 to 120 Hz variable refresh	14-inch 2K (1920 x 1200) LCD, 1 to 120 Hz variable refresh	14-inch 2.8K (2880 x 1800) OLED touch, 120 Hz
Battery (design capacity)	68.6 Wh	68.6 Wh	68.6 Wh	70.8 Wh

Table 1: *Summary of the four systems as tested. Full configurations, firmware, and application versions are listed in the appendix.*

Performance That Holds Up on Battery

A 14-inch laptop is bought to be carried, and most of its life is spent on battery in whatever power mode it shipped in. A laptop that slows down noticeably when it is unplugged is a different, slower machine than the one the buyer tried in the store, and the measure that matters is how much of the plugged-in performance is still there on the couch or in the meeting room.

Unplugging in the Balanced mode cost the XPS 14 almost nothing in everyday workloads. Procyon Essentials fell 3%, Speedometer 4%, WebXPRT 5 2%, and JetStream 3 less than 1%, and single-threaded Cinebench 2026 fell 10%. The competitor gave up 13% to 19% on the Essentials and web tests, and 30% in both Cinebench single-thread and Procyon Office. Office productivity was the one everyday workload where the XPS 14 also lost a meaningful share on battery, at 19%, against 30% for the competitor. The two X7 358H configurations followed the same pattern as the X9 388H.



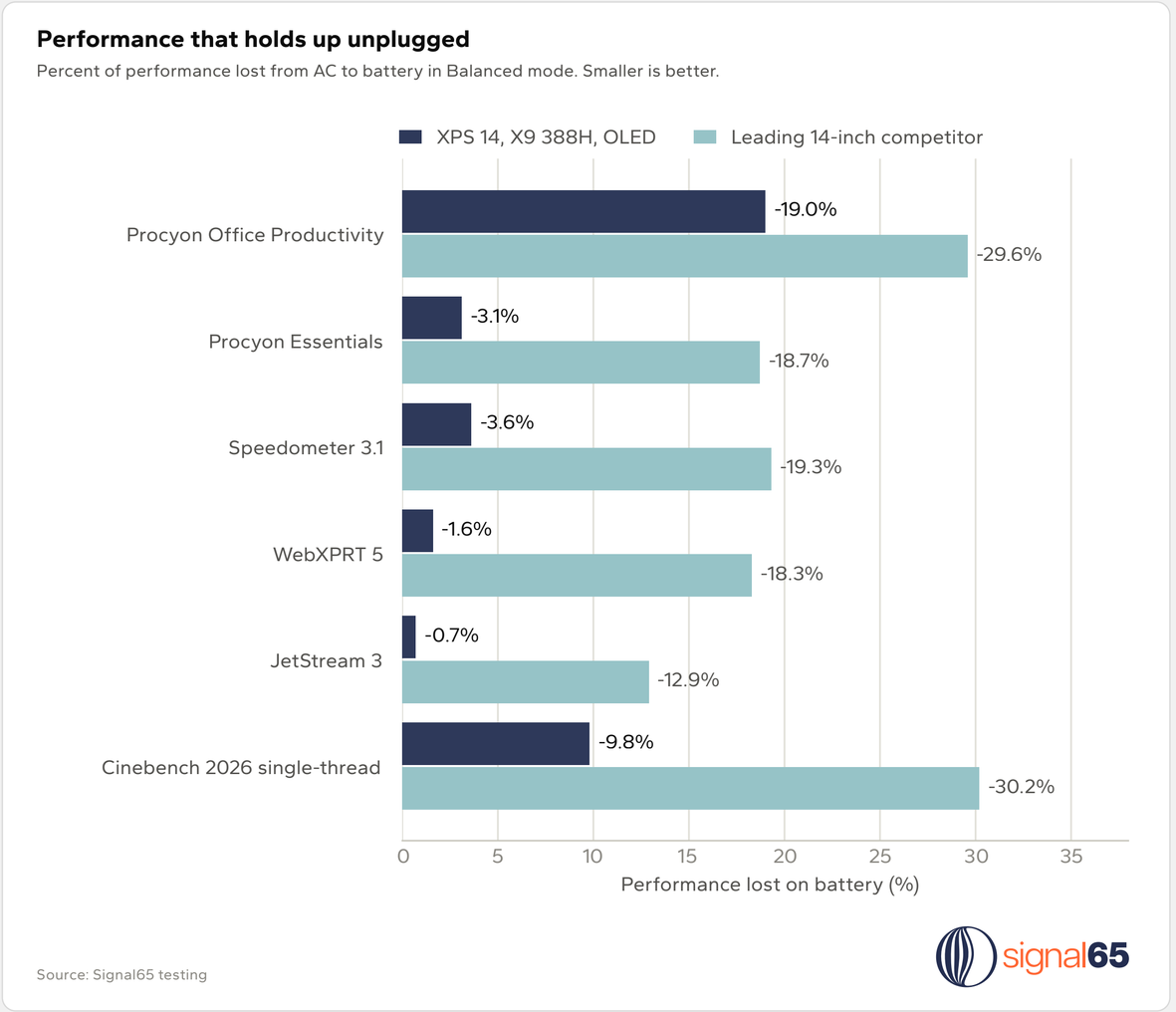


Figure 1: *Performance lost from AC to battery in the Balanced mode, XPS 14 (Core Ultra X9 388H, OLED) and the competitor. Shorter is better.*

Performance That Holds Up on Battery

Because the XPS 14 keeps so much more of its performance when the cord comes out, it is the faster laptop on battery by a wide margin. In the Balanced mode on battery the XPS 14 X9 388H led the competitor by **18% in Procyon Office**, with Excel up 24%, Outlook up 22%, PowerPoint up 19%, and Word up 11%, by **19% in Procyon Essentials**, by 24% in Speedometer, 19% in WebXPRT 5, and 14% in JetStream 3, and by **28% in Cinebench 2026 single-thread**, the test closest to how responsive a laptop feels in daily use. The X7 358H configurations led the same competitor by 7% to 27% on the same tests. Plugged in, the two systems are within a few percent of each other, so this is an advantage the XPS 14 earns on battery, in the mode most buyers never change.

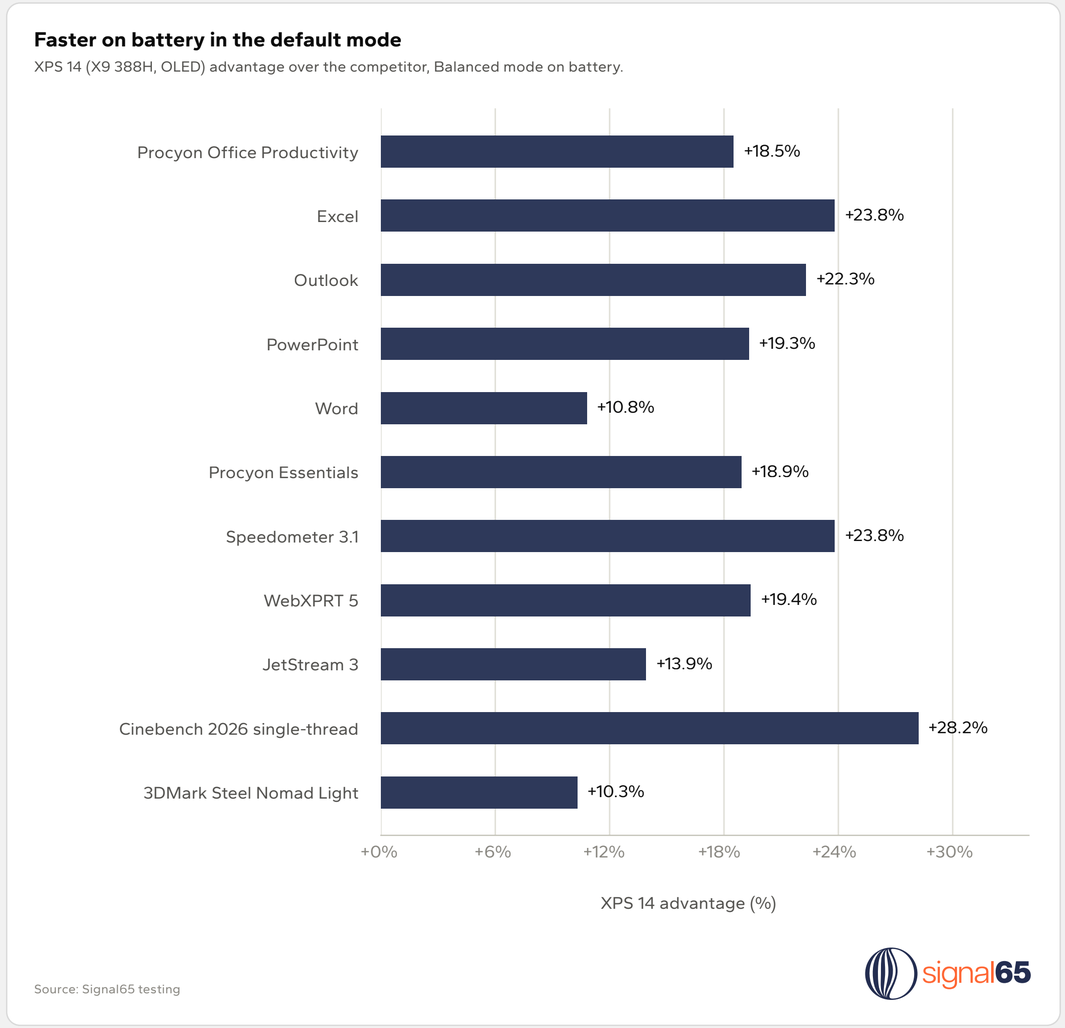
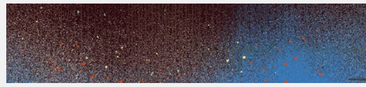


Figure 2: *XPS 14 (Core Ultra X9 388H, OLED) performance relative to the competitor, Balanced mode on battery. Higher is better.*



Choosing Your XPS 14, Display and Processor

Buyers configure a 14-inch laptop around two questions, how good the screen needs to be and how much performance they want to pay for, and each choice has a cost in battery life or speed that is rarely measured. We tested three XPS 14 configurations to measure both.

The OLED is the display-quality choice, with the contrast and color that make it the panel most buyers want to look at, and the 2K LCD is the battery-life choice by a wide margin. On the same Core Ultra X7 358H, the LCD configuration ran **27 hours 40 minutes** in the Procyon Office rundown against 16 hours 15 minutes for the OLED, 70% longer, **11 hours 09 minutes** of web browsing against 8 hours 12 minutes, 36% longer, and **20 hours 29 minutes** of video against 14 hours 16 minutes, 44% longer. Performance was the same within a few percent in every test, Office within 2%, 3DMark within 5%, Geekbench multi-core within 6%, and single-thread within 1%, so the LCD buyer gets the battery-life lead without giving up any of the performance-on-battery advantage in the previous section. The reason the Office gap is so much larger than the browsing and video gaps is the LCD panel's 1 Hz refresh floor, which lets the display idle at its lowest refresh rate while a document sits still on screen, where browsing and video keep it refreshing.

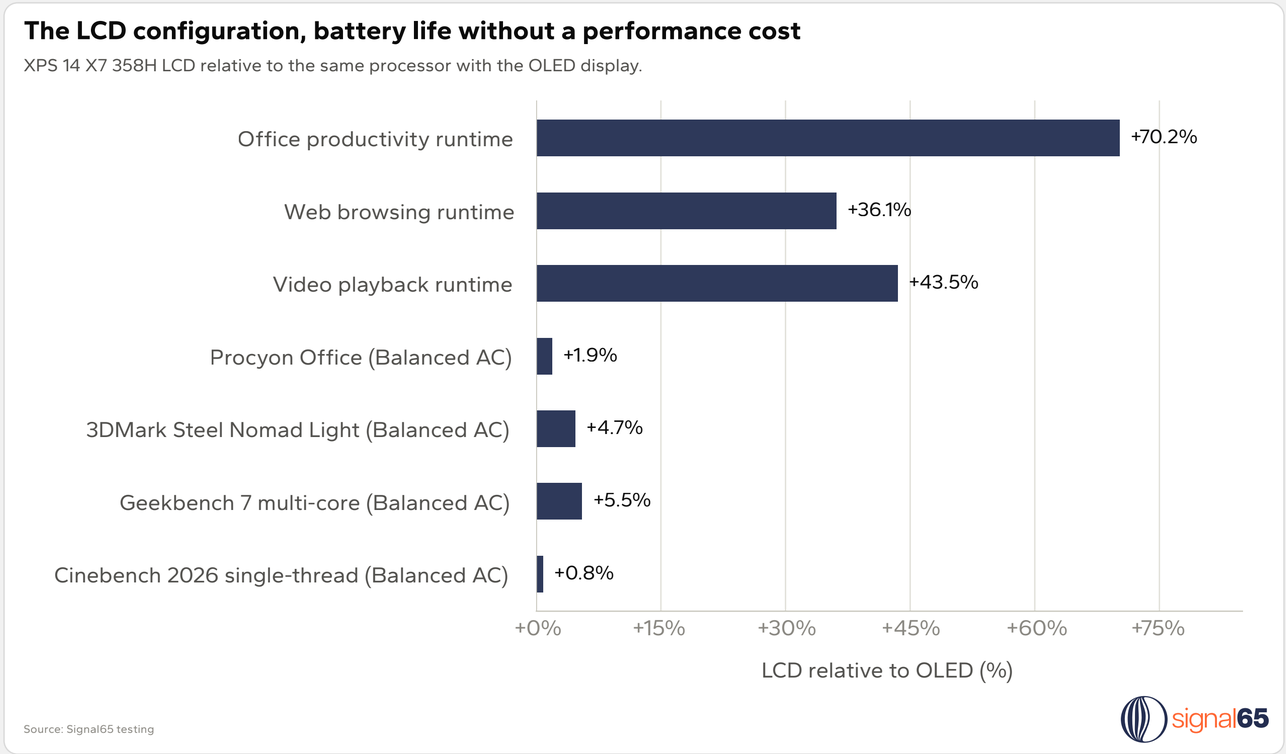
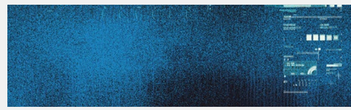


Figure 3: *XPS 14 Core Ultra X7 358H with the LCD display relative to the same processor with the OLED display. Runtime rows are from the Best Power Efficiency mode on battery and performance rows from the Balanced mode on AC.*

Choosing Your XPS 14, Display and Processor

Between the two Core Ultra X processors we tested, the choice has a smaller effect, since the X7 358H and X9 388H are the same silicon with different clock speeds, and on the same OLED display the X9 388H was 4% to 7% faster than the X7 358H in every CPU workload, single-thread up 5%, Procyon Office up 5% plugged in and 7% on battery, Geekbench multi-core up 5%, sustained rendering up 6%, and Speedometer up 4%, with graphics unchanged. The web browsing and video rundowns were within a few percent in either direction, inside normal variation, and the Office rundown showed the X9 388H about 11% shorter, so the step up carries little or no battery penalty in most use and a modest one in long Office sessions. The X9 388H is the choice for the buyer who wants the fastest XPS 14, and the X7 358H gives up very little to it. The Core Ultra 5 and Core Ultra 7 configurations sit below both and were not measured here.



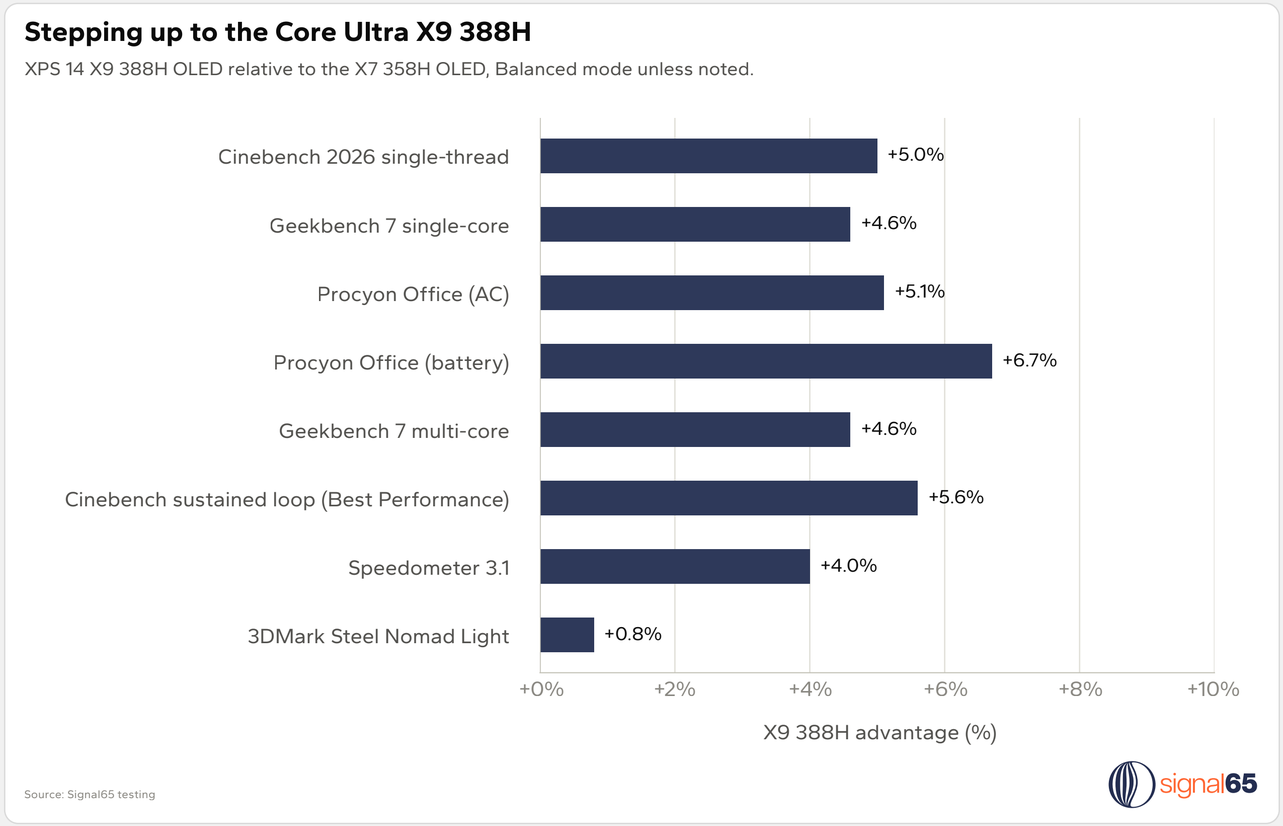


Figure 4: *XPS 14 Core Ultra X9 388H relative to the Core Ultra X7 358H on the same OLED display, Balanced mode unless noted. Higher is better.*

All-Day Battery Life

A 14-inch laptop is the one that goes everywhere, and everywhere is a place without the charger. Battery life is the first question a shopper asks about this class of laptop, and the answer for the XPS 14 depends on the display.

The XPS 14 with the LCD display is the battery-life leader of everything we tested. In the Best Power Efficiency mode it ran **27 hours 40 minutes** of Office productivity against **16 hours 54 minutes** for the competitor, 64% longer and nearly eleven more hours of work, on a battery 3% smaller. It ran **11 hours 09 minutes** of web browsing against 11 hours 00 minutes, and **20 hours 29 minutes** of video against 18 hours 44 minutes. That same configuration was 7% faster in Office, 11% faster in Essentials, 9% to 17% faster in the browser, and 14% faster in graphics than the competitor on battery, so the battery-life leader is also the faster laptop unplugged.

The competitor's OLED ran longer than the XPS 14 OLED in every rundown, by 4% in Office against the X7 358H and 15% against the X9 388H, and by about a quarter in browsing and video. The OLED configurations are not short on battery life in absolute terms. They delivered 14 to 16 hours of Office productivity and more than eight hours of web browsing on a charge, which covers a full working day with margin, so the OLED buyer gets the display and all-day battery life together, and the LCD is the choice for the buyer who needs the maximum. The XPS 14 OLED also delivers that runtime while being 18% faster in Office, 28% faster single-threaded, and 10% faster in graphics than the competitor on battery. The competitor gets its runtime by giving up 30% of its Office and single-threaded performance the moment the cord comes out, and Dell tuned the XPS 14 OLED to keep that performance instead.

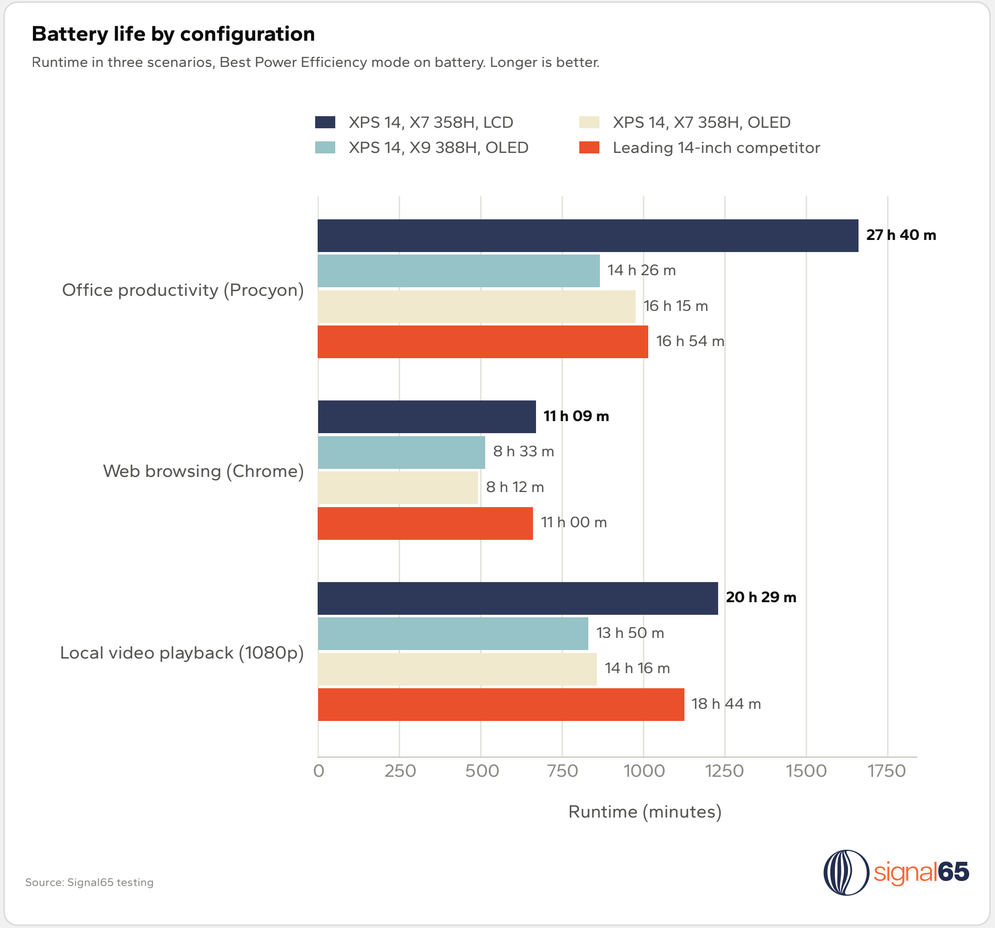
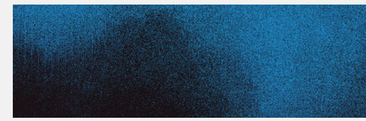


Figure 5: *Battery life in three rundown scenarios for all four systems, Best Power Efficiency mode on battery. Longer is better.*

All-Day Battery Life

Dividing each Office rundown by the battery capacity behind it removes the small capacity difference and shows the platform efficiency underneath. The LCD configuration delivered **24.2 minutes per watt-hour** against 14.3 for the competitor, 69% more, and the X7 358H OLED matched the competitor at 14.2 minutes per watt-hour on a smaller battery. Over the Office rundown the LCD configuration averaged roughly **2.5 W** of total system draw against roughly **4.2 W** for the competitor, derived from capacity and runtime.



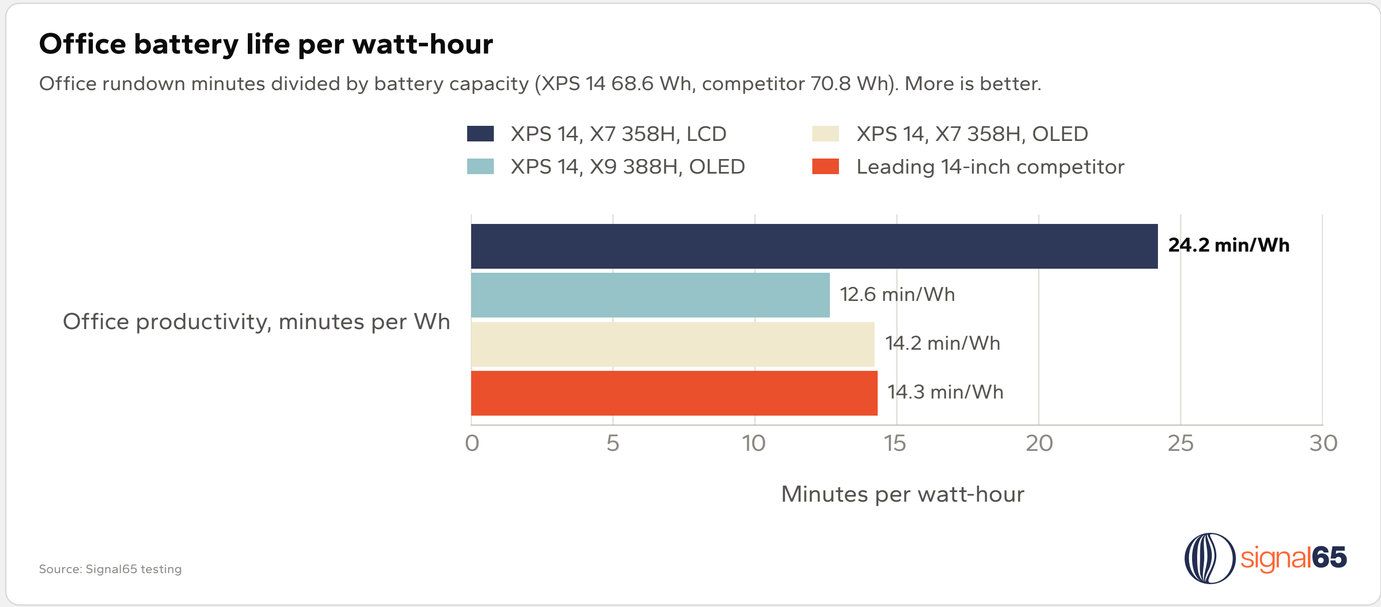


Figure 6: *Office productivity runtime per watt-hour of design capacity, Best Power Efficiency mode on battery. Higher is better.*

Graphics Leadership on the Same GPU



Gaming, photo editing, and video playback all run through the integrated graphics, and two laptops with the same Arc B390 can deliver different results depending on how much power and memory bandwidth the platform gives it. Every XPS 14 configuration led the competitor in 3DMark Steel Nomad Light, by 12% for the X9 388H OLED and **12% for the X7 358H OLED** in the Balanced mode on AC, by **17% for the X7 358H LCD**, by 9% to 14% on battery, and by 7% in the Best Performance mode. Part of the explanation is memory, since Dell ships the XPS 14 with 9600 MT/s LPDDR5X where the competitor uses 8533 MT/s, and integrated graphics are sensitive to memory bandwidth, so the XPS 14 buyer receives a faster GPU from the same silicon.

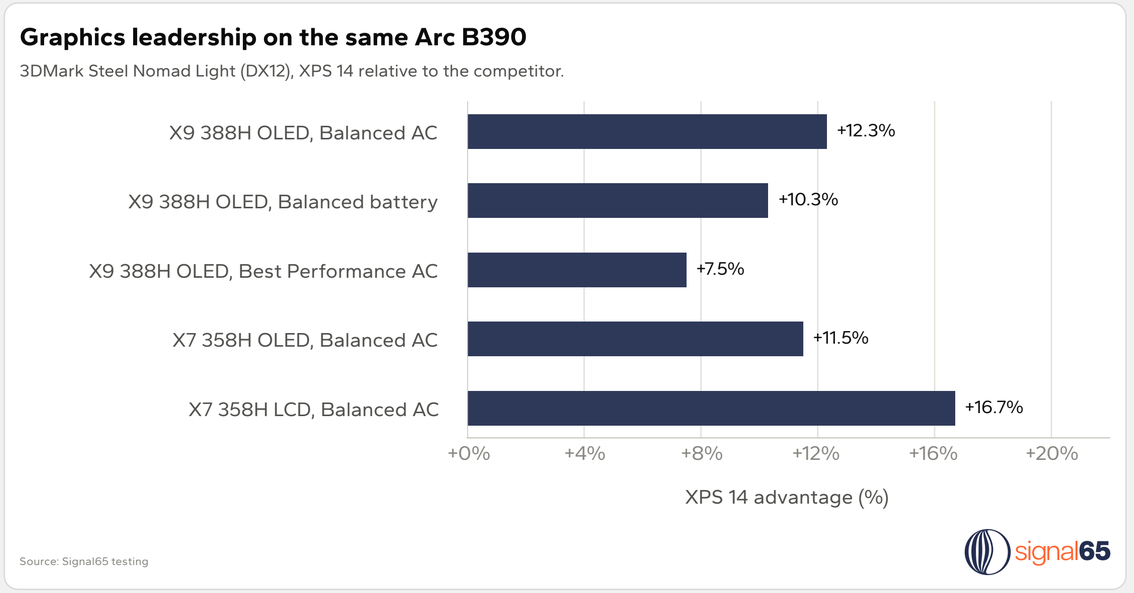


Figure 7: *3DMark Steel Nomad Light (DX12), XPS 14 relative to the competitor across configurations and modes. Higher is better.*

No Compromise on Responsiveness

Performance-on-battery results that are so one-sided invite the question of whether the XPS 14 is simply slower plugged in, and the plugged-in results show it is not. In the Balanced mode on AC, the XPS 14 X9 388H was within 1% of the competitor in Cinebench 2026 single-thread and Geekbench 7 single-core, 3% ahead in Procyon Office, within 1% in JetStream 3 and WebXPRT 5, and identical in Procyon Video Call in every mode. Sustained multi-thread rendering was parity in the Balanced mode, with the XPS 14 4% behind in the Cinebench 2026 multi-thread single iteration and 1% ahead in the sustained loop. The competitor puts distance between itself and the XPS 14 only in its Best Performance mode, where it led sustained rendering by 7%, and it pays for that with power, heat, and fan noise, which the next section measures.

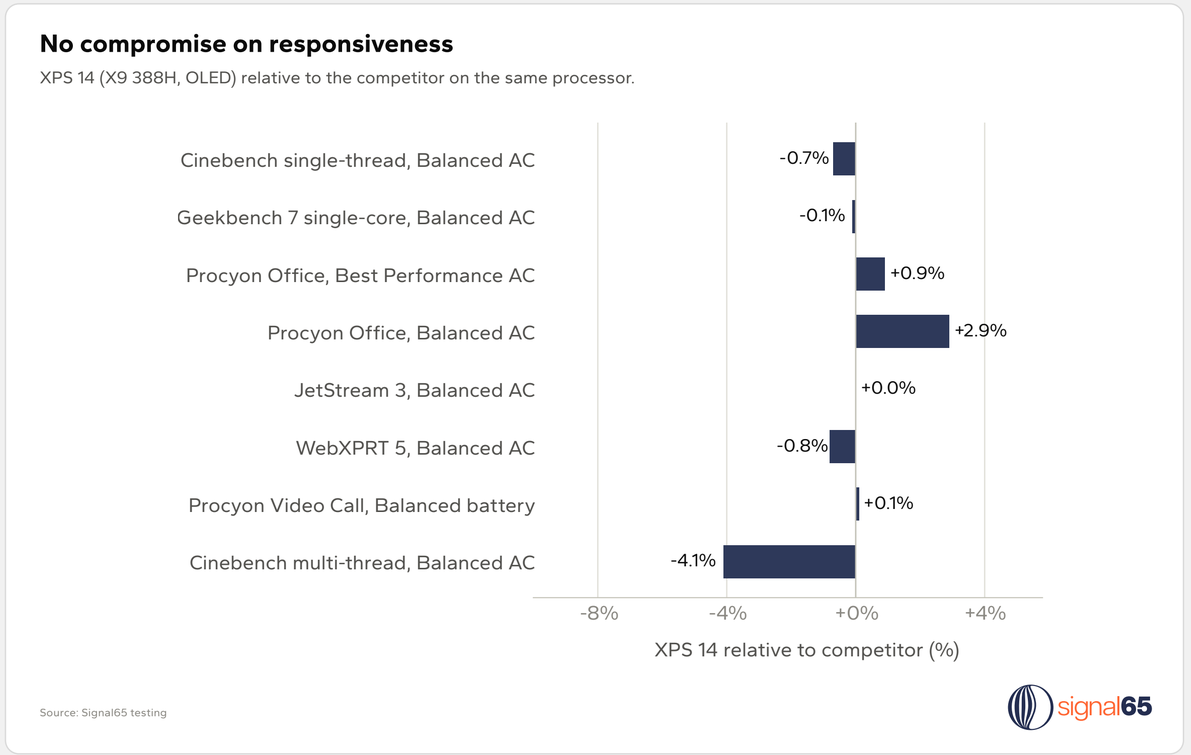
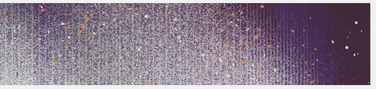


Figure 8: *XPS 14 (Core Ultra X9 388H, OLED) performance relative to the competitor on the same processor, selected tests and modes. Results within a few percent in either direction.*

Cool and Quiet

A cooling system that is both effective and quiet is hard to build in a laptop as small as the XPS 14. There is little room for a heatsink, so a thin 14-inch design usually gives the user elevated surface temperatures or a loud fan, and sometimes both. We measured sound levels at the seated user position at idle and again after running the Cinebench 2026 multi-thread loop until the noise level stabilized, in both the Balanced and Best Performance modes, on the XPS 14 X9 388H OLED, the XPS 14 X7 358H LCD, and the competitor.



At idle the XPS 14 was the quieter laptop in both modes, at 18 to 19 dBA against 20 to 22 dBA for the competitor, low enough on all three that the fan is inaudible in a normal room. Under the sustained Cinebench load the three systems were close. In the Best Performance mode all three settled at 41 to 42 dBA, and in the Balanced mode the two XPS 14 configurations ran at about 35 dBA against 33 dBA for the competitor, a 2 dBA difference near the threshold of what a listener can distinguish.

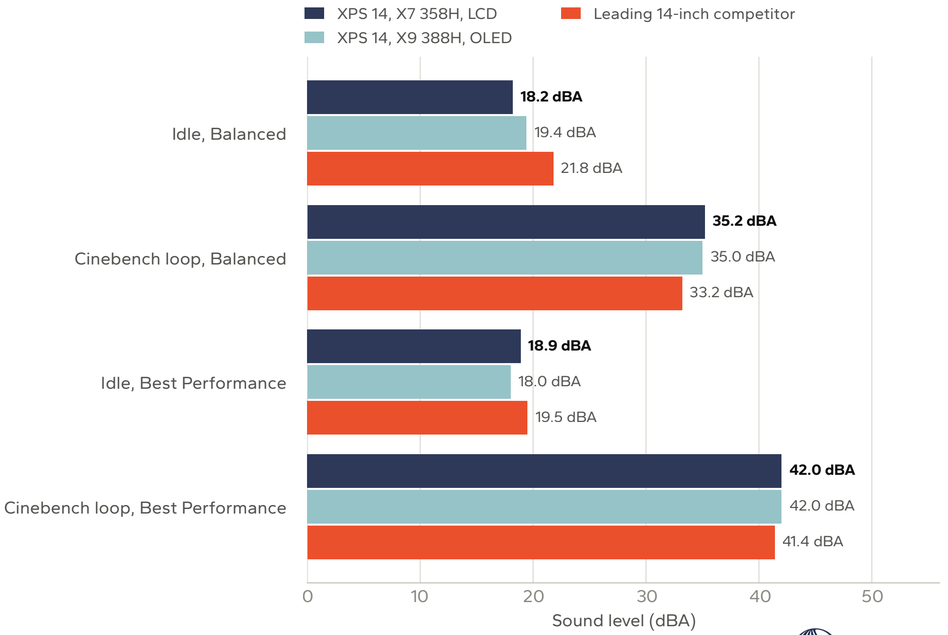
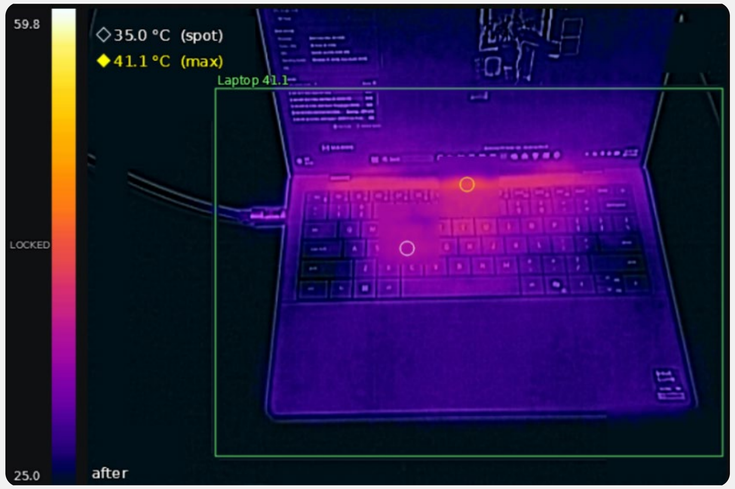


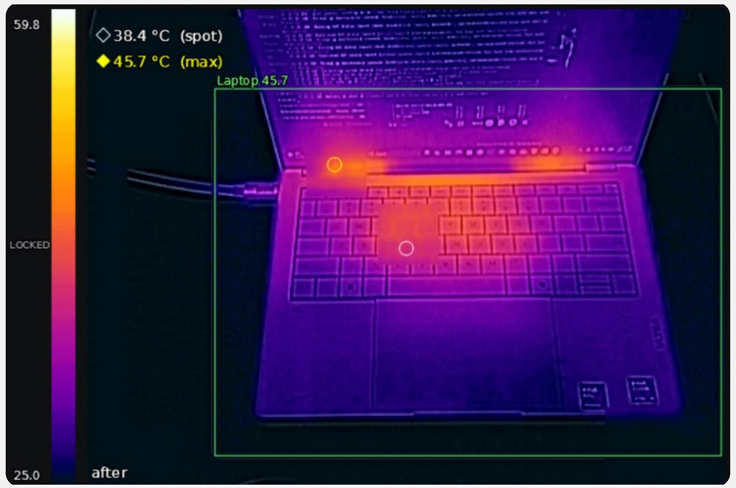
Figure 9: *A-weighted sound level at the seated user position, idle and under a sustained Cinebench 2026 multi-thread loop, Balanced and Best Performance modes on AC. Lower is better.*

Cool and Quiet

The two cooling designs differ more in thermal performance than in noise, and the gap depends on the mode. In the Balanced mode the systems were close, with a hottest point near 41 degrees Celsius and an average deck temperature near 28 degrees after the Cinebench loop on both, and the XPS 14 did a slightly better job keeping the heat from spreading across the deck. In the Best Performance mode, the mode that produces the most heat, the hottest point on the competitor reached **45.7 degrees**, against **43.2 degrees** on the XPS 14 X7 358H LCD and **41.1 degrees** on the XPS 14 X9 388H OLED, the coolest system we measured, and the competitor's average deck temperature was about 30 degrees against 28 to 29 on the Dell systems. The thermal images show the XPS 14 confining most of the heat to the strip above the keyboard and letting only a modest amount into the keys, while the competitor's hottest region sits in the center of the keyboard where the hands rest. With the same processor, the same load, and the same fan noise, the XPS 14 gives the person typing a cooler keyboard.



Dell XPS 14 (Core Ultra X9 388H, OLED)



Competitor

Figure 10: *Thermal camera captures of the keyboard deck after a sustained Cinebench 2026 multi-thread loop, Best Performance mode on AC. The diamond marks the spot reading at the center of the keyboard and the square marks the hottest point in the frame.*

Creative Work

In Adobe Photoshop and Premiere Pro the XPS 14 X9 388H split the results with the competitor. PugetBench for Photoshop, which leans on the GPU for many of its operations, favored the XPS 14 by **5% on AC and 16% on battery** in the Balanced mode, consistent with its lead in 3DMark on the same graphics. PugetBench for Premiere Pro is more CPU-bound and sustained, and there the XPS 14 trailed by 3% on AC and 5% on battery, differences small enough that a user would not notice them in a timeline. The XPS 14 is the faster of the two for photo work and the equal of the competitor for video editing.

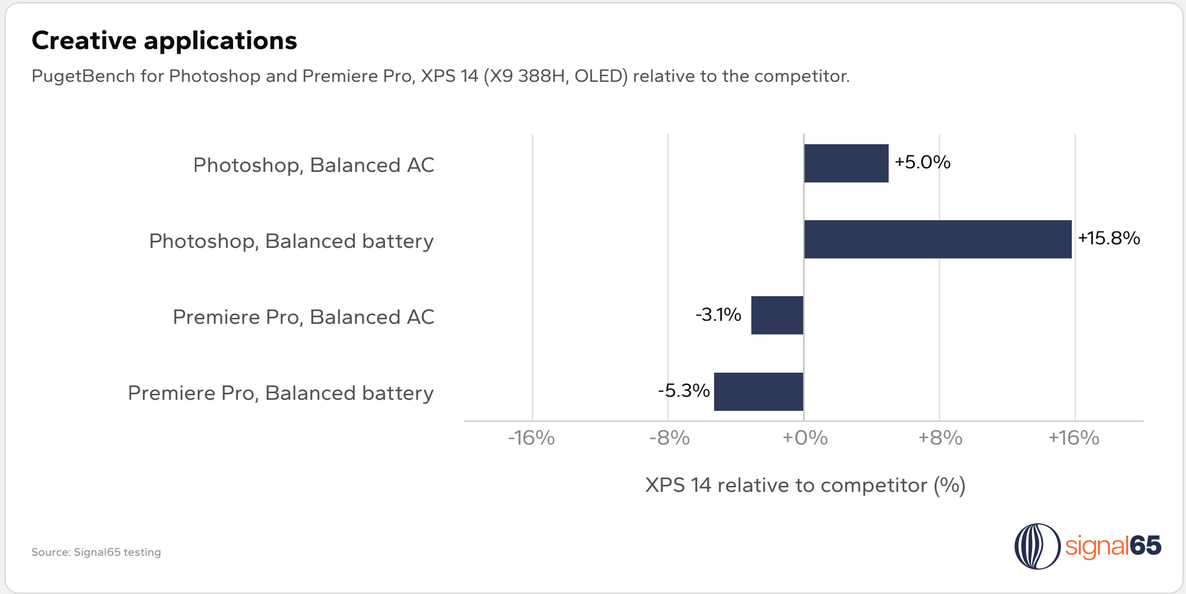
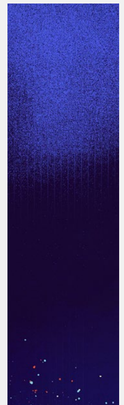


Figure 11: *PugetBench for Photoshop and Premiere Pro, XPS 14 (Core Ultra X9 388H, OLED) relative to the competitor, Balanced mode on AC and on battery.*

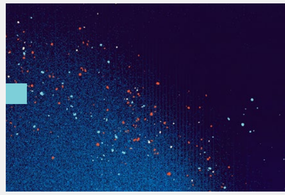


Design, Display, and Connectivity

The XPS 14 pairs its display choice with panels that help deliver the battery life. The 2.8K (2880 x 1800) OLED touch display and the 2K (1920 x 1200) LCD are both variable refresh rate panels, 20 to 120 Hz on the OLED and 1 to 120 Hz on the LCD, among the first laptops to ship them. The panel lowers its refresh rate when the content on screen is static, and the LCD's 1 Hz floor is the direct cause of its 27-hour Office result, since a document that sits still on screen costs the display almost nothing to hold. The OLED is the choice for the buyer who wants the best picture, with 100% DCI-P3 color and a 500-nit peak, and it still carries the performance-on-battery advantage that every XPS 14 shares. The 2K LCD is a strong panel in its own right, at 500 nits typical brightness and 100% sRGB coverage, so the battery-life choice does not mean settling for a dim or washed-out screen.

Connectivity runs through three Thunderbolt 4 ports, each with DisplayPort 2.1 and power delivery, so the laptop charges, drives external displays, and connects storage through any of them, and a universal audio jack remains for wired headsets. At 3.00 lb and 14.62 mm with the OLED display, the XPS 14 is a light laptop for its class, and the battery results in this report were achieved with a 68.6 Wh battery that is slightly smaller than the competitor's.



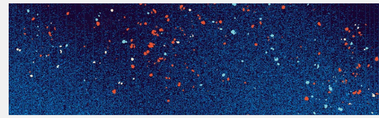


Conclusions

In our testing of three Dell XPS 14 configurations against a leading 14-inch competitor built on the same Intel Core Ultra X9 388H, the XPS 14 was the laptop built for the way a 14-inch machine is used. It kept 96% to 99% of its plugged-in performance in everyday workloads when unplugged in the default mode, where the competitor gave up 13% to 30%, and as a result it was 14% to 28% faster than the competitor on battery in Office, in the browser, and in single-threaded responsiveness. Plugged in, the two were within a few percent of each other, so none of that was bought with desk performance.

The configuration choices distinguish the XPS 14 from the rest of the category. The LCD configuration delivered over 27 hours of Office productivity, 64% longer than the competitor on a smaller battery and 69% more runtime from every watt-hour, while remaining the faster laptop unplugged. The OLED configuration gives up runtime to the competitor's OLED in a rundown and keeps the performance the competitor gives up to get there, with 14 to 16 hours of Office productivity on a charge. Between the two Core Ultra X processors, the step from the X7 358H to the X9 388H buys 4% to 7% everywhere with little or no battery penalty in most use, and every configuration leads the competitor by 8% to 17% in graphics on the same Arc B390. Under the heaviest load, the XPS 14 ran its keyboard deck 2.5 to 4.6 degrees cooler than the competitor at the same fan noise level, and kept the heat away from the hands.

The processor sets the baseline for what a laptop can be, and this testing shows how much the OEM's design decisions determine what it becomes. Dell tuned the XPS 14 to hold its performance on battery, to give the buyer a measured choice between the best display and the longest battery life, and to keep the chassis cool under load. For a premium consumer laptop that spends most of its life away from an outlet, that is the right set of choices, and the XPS 14 is an outstanding 14-inch laptop for the buyer who wants all of them at once.



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System Configurations

	Dell XPS 14 (X9 388H OLED)	Dell XPS 14 (X7 358H OLED)	Dell XPS 14 (X7 358H LCD)	HP OmniBook Ultra 14
Model	XPS 14 DA14260	XPS 14 DA14260	XPS 14 DA14260	OmniBook Ultra Laptop 14-kd0xxx
Processor	Intel Core Ultra X9 388H, 16 cores / 16 threads	Intel Core Ultra X7 358H, 16 cores / 16 threads	Intel Core Ultra X7 358H, 16 cores / 16 threads	Intel Core Ultra X9 388H, 16 cores / 16 threads
Graphics	Intel Arc B390, driver 32.0.101.8622	Intel Arc B390, driver 32.0.101.8622	Intel Arc B390, driver 32.0.101.8622	Intel Arc B390, driver 32.0.101.8356
Memory	32 GB LPDDR5X @ 9600 MT/s	32 GB LPDDR5X @ 9600 MT/s	32 GB LPDDR5X @ 9600 MT/s	32 GB LPDDR5X @ 8533 MT/s
Storage	1 TB PCIe NVMe SSD	1 TB PCIe NVMe SSD	1 TB PCIe NVMe SSD	PCIe NVMe SSD
Display	14-inch 2880 x 1800 OLED touch, 20 to 120 Hz variable refresh	14-inch 2880 x 1800 OLED touch, 20 to 120 Hz variable refresh	14-inch 1920 x 1200 LCD, 1 to 120 Hz variable refresh	14-inch 2880 x 1800 OLED touch, 120 Hz
Dimensions and weight	309.52 x 209.71 x 14.62 mm, 3.00 lb (1.36 kg), manufacturer specification	309.52 x 209.71 x 14.62 mm, 3.00 lb (1.36 kg), manufacturer specification	309.52 x 209.71 x 15.20 mm, 3.00 lb (1.36 kg), manufacturer specification	Manufacturer specification
Battery (design)	68,607 mWh	68,607 mWh	68,607 mWh	70,824 mWh
BIOS	Dell 1.8.2 (May 21st, 2026)	Dell 1.9.0 (June 1st, 2026)	Dell 1.9.0 (June 1st, 2026)	Insyde F.06 (June 24th, 2026)
Operating system	Windows 11 25H2, 10.0.26200.9168	Windows 11 25H2, 10.0.26200.9168	Windows 11 25H2, 10.0.26200.9168	Windows 11 25H2, 10.0.26200.9168

Table 2: *System configurations as tested, captured August 27th, 2026.*

Applications Used

Application	Version	Notes
UL Procyon	2.12.2842.0	Office Productivity, Essentials, Office Productivity battery test
Cinebench 2026	2026.1.0	Single-thread, multi-thread, sustained loop
Geekbench 7	7.0.0	Single-core and multi-core
3DMark	2.32.8897.0	Steel Nomad Light, DX12 and Vulkan
Google Chrome	Stable channel	JetStream 3, Speedometer 3.1, WebXPRT 5, browsing battery rundown
PugetBench	1.4.30	Photoshop and Premiere Pro
Local video playback		Tears of Steel, 1080p

Table 3: *Benchmark applications and versions. MotionMark was run but is not reported, because the XPS 14's variable refresh rate panels hold a low refresh rate during the test and the result reflects display behavior rather than processor performance. GPU-path AI results are not reported because the graphics driver versions differed between the systems at the time of testing.*


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