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Samsung Galaxy Indulge (MetroPCS)

●●●○ EDITOR RATING: GOOD 0 COMMENTS

REVIEW | COMMENTS | SPECS | COMPARE

MSRP
\$399.00



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PROS
Fastest, most powerful smartphone on MetroPCS. Full keyboard.

CONS
Expensive. Feels flimsy when compared with other high-end smartphones. Dim screen. Poor voice quality.

BOTTOM LINE
The first LTE smartphone available in the U.S., the Samsung Galaxy Indulge is the most powerful handset you'll find on MetroPCS. But you can get better bang for your buck.

BY SACHA SEGAN The first LTE smartphone available in the U.S., the Samsung Galaxy Indulge for MetroPCS is the budget carrier's most powerful phone. It makes the cut for our list of [The 10 Best Phones with Keyboards](#). But it sits in an uncomfortable place in the market: It's not as powerful as other carriers' flagship smartphones, and it costs a lot more (\$399 direct) than other good choices on MetroPCS.

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Physical Features and Call Quality

The Samsung Galaxy Indulge reminds me of a cut-rate version of the [Samsung Epic 4G](#) for Sprint (\$249, 4 stars). The phone's main problem: It feels like Samsung cut corners here. MetroPCS offers plenty of other smartphones that cost at least half the price of the Indulge. For \$400, you shouldn't have to compromise.

[VIEW ALL 6 PHOTOS IN GALLERY](#)

The Galaxy Indulge is a slightly chunky slider phone at 4.6 by 2.4 by 0.6 inches (HWD) and 5.4 ounces. I like that the Indulge uses hard buttons for its Home, Back and Menu keys, but I'm a bit turned off by the Indulge's somewhat dim, grainy 3.5-inch 320-by-480 LCD. I could forgive it on a \$200 phone, but at \$400, you should get a better display. Slide the phone's hard plastic body open and you'll see a four-row QWERTY keyboard of slightly depressed, rubbery keys.

Everything about the Indulge's design screams "cheap Epic clone," although it was designed by the same company that created the Epic. The plasticky body feels more flimsy, the design is less classy, the keys are made of what feels like a cheaper material, and the screen is dimmer. The comparison is not salutary. A MetroPCS device like the [LG Optimus M](#) (\$149, 4 stars) is a well-made, low-cost smartphone, while the Indulge tries to be a high-end smartphone, but falls short.

Call quality here isn't very good. Voices sound dim and buzzy; they're certainly comprehensible, but through a thin layer of sticky fuzz. Transmissions also sound a bit distant and thready. In my tests, the speakerphone was loud, blustery, and a bit clearer. The Indulge worked fine with our [Aliph Jawbone Era](#) Bluetooth headset (\$129, 4.5 stars), including using voice dialing.

Our battery test result, five hours, 23 minutes of talk time, isn't bad. But searching for 4G in weak signal areas burns through a lot of juice in the phone's idle state. Considering I travel in the signal-free New York subway frequently, the phone's battery lasted less than a day in some circumstances.

Like the Epic, the Indulge is a 4G phone. But where the Epic has a 3G network to fall back on, the Indulge doesn't. It works on MetroPCS's LTE network where it can find it and on the much slower 2G CDMA network where it can't. There's also 802.11 b/g Wi-Fi on board, which works with the Easy WiFi client to very neatly automatically reconnect to familiar networks.

I got better 4G speeds on the Indulge than on MetroPCS's first 4G feature phone, the [Samsung Craft SCH-R900](#) (\$299, 3.5 stars), but I still wouldn't consider the speeds 4G. On average, I got 2.5Mbps both up and down. That's actually a terrific upload speed, but a

lower download speed than the 5Mbps MetroPCS has promised in some metro areas. That said, it's much faster than the download speed you'll see on any other MetroPCS phone. And like with the carrier's other phones, the Indulge can't be used as a hotspot for a PC.

Android, Software, and Multimedia

There is one feature here that's better than the Epic: the Indulge is running a later version of Android: 2.2.1. That made for speedy performance and good benchmark results. MetroPCS doesn't have any other phone that combines a fast network, a full keyboard, and a real Web browser.

MetroPCS loads a huge amount of custom software on here, and that's on top of Samsung's own TouchWiz suite. There's the MetroStudio downloadable music and video store, the Metro411 directory assistance service, Metro's own app store, a social-networking client, custom e-mail (in addition to the two e-mail clients already on the phone), a coupon program, and a Wi-Fi hotspot locator. There's also a "virtual credit card" program that's actually quite cool. If you don't have a credit or debit card, it lets you shop online and charge purchases to a prepaid account. All of this makes for a lot of icons, but you'll find at least some of them useful. The Indulge also runs the more than 100,000 apps in the Android Market, of course.

The Galaxy Indulge is a decent music and video player, but not quite up to Samsung Galaxy S standards. The Indulge comes with about 1.7GB of free onboard memory, along with a 4GB memory card, half of which is taken up by the movie *Iron Man 2*. (Of course, you can delete that.) You can also insert your own memory card; our 32GB SanDisk test card worked fine.

The phone has the same great media player we've seen on the Galaxy S phones, and is able to handle pretty much all music and video formats, including XVID and DIVX. But something seemed, once more, just a little bit off; I had a bit of a lip sync issue on one of my DIVX files, for instance, during testing. The lower-res, dim LCD also makes videos look weak when compared with higher-end phones.

The 3.2-megapixel camera takes bright, punchy photos, but it takes too long to lock in focus, with a 1.3-second average shutter delay. There was also some blurring in very low light. The video mode records smooth 640-by-480 videos at 30 frames per second.

Pricing and Conclusions

The Galaxy Indulge's \$399 price is softened a bit by MetroPCS's wonderful \$50 and \$60 per month rate plans. Really, you want to go for the \$60 unlimited plan; the cheaper, \$50 plan involves some arcane restrictions on Internet services. Since MetroPCS has no contracts, though, you could always start at the \$50 plan and trade up if you need to.

I realize I may sound a little harsh on the Galaxy Indulge throughout this review. That's because I'm comparing it, in my mind, to the Galaxy S line on the four major carriers (plus U.S. Cellular). It falls short there. But the phone still gets a good rating because it is, undoubtedly, MetroPCS's best Internet device, with a fast connection and a great processor.

While the Samsung Galaxy Indulge is MetroPCS's most powerful smartphone, it doesn't get our Editors' Choice. That award still belongs to the LG Optimus M, which I believe is the best smartphone for most MetroPCS customers. For a mere \$149—half the price of the

Galaxy Indulge—you get a sleek Android smartphone with a very finished-feeling experience. While the Samsung Galaxy Indulge has a faster processor and speedier Internet access, the LG Optimus M is a far better buy.

Compare the Samsung Galaxy Indulge to other similar cell phones.

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BY SASCHA SEGAN

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