HTC drops Vive to $499 and opens preorders for $799 headset-only Vive Pro



HTC says it will charge $799 for its new, higher-resolution Vive Pro virtual reality headset — and we mean, literally, just the headset. Vive Pro preorders open today, with the first headsets shipping on April 5th. They're designed to be swapped into an existing Vive setup, using the old Vive's lighthouse tracking beacons and controllers. Meanwhile, the current Vive system will drop to $499, cutting $100 off the current price. Anyone who purchases a Vive Pro by June 3rd will get six free months of HTC's Viveport subscription service, and a price for a full Vive Pro kit will be announced sometime in the future.

The Vive Pro was announced early this year at CES, marking the first major upgrade to the Vive since its launch in 2016. It substantially increases the Vive's screen resolution, using two OLED displays that offer 1400 x 1600 pixels per eye compared to 1080 x 1200 on the current Vive. It also includes

a variety of ergonomic changes, including built-in headphones and a head strap that tightens via dial instead of velcro. You could get these options via a kit for the original Vive, but now they're built into the core device, and we've found the hardware to be a distinct improvement over its predecessor.

The old Vive isn't going anywhere for now

HTC has previously said it will keep selling the original system through 2018, and Vive US general manager Daniel O'Brien describes the Vive Pro as a way to push the upper level of tethered VR while letting HTC offer a relatively affordable version as well. HTC previously announced a standalone headset with Google Daydream, but it canceled that project, although a standalone device launched in China and may expand to other markets. (You can get a wireless adapter for the Vive or Vive Pro, but they still require a PC to work.)

For now, HTC is focused heavily on PC-based high-end virtual reality. This contrasts with its primary competitor Oculus, which is looking increasingly toward standalone and mobile VR. Oculus is expected to launch its $199 Go mobile headset in May and is developing a fully tracked standalone device codenamed Santa Cruz.

The Vive Pro is way at the high end of mass-market VR headsets — the Oculus Rift and PlayStation VR systems cost $399, for instance — but HTC aggressively courts businesses, not just individual consumers. An arcade, design company, or other professional operation won't suffer from quite the same sticker shock, particularly if they're already paying the Vive's "business edition."

If you're a non-Vive owner who wants to jump straight to the Vive Pro, you're in a tough spot at the moment since the only option at launch is to get both a Vive system and the Pro headset. But HTC says that it will announce a Pro bundle price soon to fix this. For now, the Pro looks less like a direct

second-generation Vive and more like a high-end offshoot of its current edition.

https://www.theverge.com/2018/3/19/17137336/htc-vive-pro-vr-hmd-upgrade-price-preorder-shipping-date