

The Nokia 3.1 Plus comes to the US for \$160, does entry-level phones right

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- The Nokia 3.1 Plus, complete with huge Nokia and Cricket logos.
- This looks surprisingly modern for \$160! An 18:9 screen and not much else.
- Dual cameras and a fingerprint reader for \$160? Really?

If you're looking for a bargain on a smartphone, HMD's Nokia lineup is one of the best and most unique in the industry. For 2019, the Finnish smartphone company says a North American expansion will be a big focus, and today, for the first time, it's announcing carrier deals for a few low-end models. Cricket is getting the Nokia 3.1 Plus, Verizon is getting the Nokia 2.1, and in Canada, Rogers will begin to carry an undisclosed Nokia phone.

Cricket Wireless, an AT&T MVNO, is getting the Nokia 3.1 Plus (pictured above), which is definitely the most impressive of the two phones. For just \$160, you get a fairly modern-looking smartphone design. The 3.1 Plus comes with a 6-inch, 1440×720, 18:9 LCD, a rear fingerprint reader, a dual rear camera system, and Android 9 Pie with two years of updates.

This is the first time the Nokia 3.1 Plus has come to the US, and interestingly, the trip to America also required a swap in the SoC. The international version uses a MediaTek Helio P22 SoC, but the American version switches to a Qualcomm Snapdragon 439 SoC. Both chips have eight 2GHz ARM Cortex A53 CPUs and are built on a 12nm manufacturing process, so there should not be a huge difference. Why bother making the switch, though? You've got to wonder if a move like this is driven by Qualcomm's allegedly unfair patent licensing.

Other specs for the Nokia 3.1 Plus include 2GB of RAM, 32GB of storage, a MicroSD slot, a USB-C port, NFC, and a headphone jack. The back is plastic and pops off, but the 3500mAh battery is not replaceable.

Under \$200 can be a tough spot for a smartphone, but if you're willing to make a few compromises for the price, the \$160 Nokia 3.1 looks like a surprisingly competent smartphone for the money. The only other competition at this price point is maybe Motorola, but this Nokia phone will get regular OS updates while the Motorola phone won't.

- Android Go on the Nokia 2 V.
- Pretty much the bottom of the barrel here, with a single camera lens and no fingerprint reader.
- The side. This thing is 9.67mm thick.

On the even lower end of the spectrum, there's the "Nokia 2 V" on Verizon. This is basically unchanged from the Nokia 2.1 that was announced internationally. For \$115, you get a stripped-down device, with a Qualcomm Snapdragon 425 (that's four 1.4GHz Cortex A53 CPUs at 28nm), only 1GB of RAM, 8GB of storage, an old school MicroUSB port, no fingerprint reader, no NFC, and a 5.5-inch, 1280×720 LCD. This is an Android Go phone, so you're getting a stripped-down version of Android 8.1 Oreo with various weird "Go" Google apps.

For most, I can't say I would recommend something as cheap as

the 2V, which clearly has to make tough compromises. But as an entry-level phone, the 3.1 Plus looks like a good balance of capability and price. Both phones will show up as prepaid devices at their respective carriers soon.

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