Why Nintendo can get away with a $450 Switch 2 price

When Nintendo announced the Switch 2 would cost $450, my initial reaction was disappointment. “Why does it cost so much more?” I thought to myself. “Why does Japan get it cheaper?” my brain jealously added, once I learned that Nintendo would sell a Japan-only model for the equivalent of just $333.

It felt like Nintendo was about to overcharge the entire rest of the world for a modest improvement to its original $300 console, one that doesn’t come with an OLED display or anti-drift magnetic sticks. Surely it can’t cost Nintendo that much more to make, especially seeing how it’s selling the exact same hardware for so much “less” in Japan?

But while Nintendo might be charging more than I’d like to spend, particularly with its $80 games and its button that makes you pay extra, I no longer think the company’s being distinctly unfair to gamers outside of Japan. The $450 price makes more sense when you consider what’s happened to the dollar and the yen.

The original Switch still costs around 33,000 yen in Japan.
Image: Nintendo

Since its March 3rd, 2017, debut, Nintendo basically hasn’t changed the price of the original Switch in either the US or Japan. The portable console cost $300 USD or ¥32,378 in 2017; it costs the same $300 USD or a very slightly higher ¥32,978 today, eight years later. But the US economy and the Japanese economy have *not* been the same since 2017. Inflation and exchange rates have drastically changed since then.

On the one hand, the US dollar now buys less in the US than it did in 2017. Dramatic US inflation means that an original $300 Switch would cost nearly $400 if introduced today. The same is not true in Japan, which has historically had low inflation, or even deflation, until fairly recently. A ¥32,378 Switch would cost more like ¥36,000 today if Nintendo had followed the trend.

On the other hand, US dollars are now worth dramatically *more* in Japan because the Japanese yen is remarkably weak. Compare: on January 13th, 2017, the day Nintendo announced the original Switch's price, you could only get 114 yen per US dollar. On April 2nd, 2025, the day Nintendo announced the Switch 2, each dollar was worth almost 150 yen. Each dollar buys 30 percent more in Japan than it did back then.

Japan is experiencing more tourism than ever before as a result of that weak yen, to the point some particularly scenic locations have become overrun – it was international news when a small town near Mount Fuji erected a barrier to keep people from blocking the streets while duplicating an iconic Instagram shot of the mountain merged with a convenience store. I just came back from a two-week trip to Japan, and I've never eaten so well for so little cash.

But Japanese residents can't say the same. Not only is Japan starting to experience inflated food prices, but their wages reportedly aren't keeping pace. It's not fair to say, "Oh, Japan only has to pay $330 for the Switch 2 while we pay $450," because *both* the Japanese and international versions cost almost exactly 50 percent more than Nintendo charges for an original Switch. Going from $300 to $450 is a 50 percent increase; going from the Switch's ¥32,978 to the Japan-only Switch 2's ¥49,980 is 51.6 percent. That suggests Nintendo might be telling the truth that the price was not designed to

preempt tariffs.

You really don’t need a convenience store to take a lovely pic of Mt. Fuji!
Photo by Sean Hollister / The Verge

Instead, the disparity we see is likely because the dollar goes so much further right now, and because the yen does not. As one Tokyo-based game streamer put it: “Salaries and cost of living hasn’t changed at all here so 49,980 feels like 450 usd.” A fun thought experiment: if exchange rates were the same as they were in 2017, the Japan-only Switch 2 would cost $434 in US money. It would cost $450 USD there if the dollar sinks to 111 yen or below, which it did during large portions of 2018, 2019, 2020, and 2021.

If Japan-based Nintendo decided that the right price for the Switch 2 is 50 percent more than the original Switch, it does kind of follow that the US model would cost 50 percent more, too.

Even the region lock makes some sense, as much as I hate the idea. If Nintendo didn’t lock it down, foreigners could take advantage of the weak yen to buy and scalp the Japanese versions all over the world, similar to what’s already reportedly happening with Japan’s retro game stores.

I couldn’t find a Mother 3 cart in my city trips — one clerk laughed when I asked — but I eventually found this one in the suburbs.
Photo by Sean Hollister / The Verge

But can Nintendo justify charging 50 percent more for a new

handheld eight years later? That's where I'm less sure. While US inflation might help justify a $400 Switch (again, the $300 original Switch would cost nearly $400 in today's money) or even a $80 game, I think it's more that Nintendo can *afford to get away* with a $450 Switch because real competition is slim.

Sony and Microsoft won't have true handheld PlayStations and Xboxes for years to come, and handheld PC makers are still struggling to beat the Steam Deck, let alone the Switch. (Nintendo can sometimes sell more Switches in a month than handheld gaming PCs sell in a year.)

And while you can currently buy a new PS5 in the US for less than a Switch 2, that isn't true in Japan — after *three* price hikes, the cheapest PS5 Digital Edition now costs ¥72,980, 46 percent more than the new Japan-only Switch, and Sony's pricey PS5 Pro costs a staggering ¥119,980 there.

Even Japan's cheapest Steam Deck costs 20 percent more than a Switch 2, at ¥59,800 for the 256GB LCD model, so the Switch really and truly stands alone. Perhaps that's why the gamer vibe in Japan is reportedly quite positive despite a 50 percent higher price. "The general consensus among Japanese gamers in response to this has been "Thank you Nintendo, please become the ruling party of our country next," writes *Automaton*.

The vibe definitely isn't as rosy in the US, but at least the price now makes some sort of sense to me. And now that President Donald Trump has given companies like Nintendo a 90-day reprieve from many of his tariffs, a period of time that covers the Nintendo Switch 2's June 5th launch, Nintendo may be able to have its cake and eat it, too. Nintendo can launch with its promised price and blame Trump for any later increase. Perhaps today's $450 will look generous by comparison.

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-dollar-yen-exchange-rate-inflation