

GLOBAL PRICING & CULTURE REPORT · 2026

The World's iPhone Divide

Where the iPhone 17 Pro is most expensive, where it's cheapest, and why the world can't stop buying it — a data-driven look at global pricing and the culture of the craze.

41

MARKETS COMPARED

2.3x

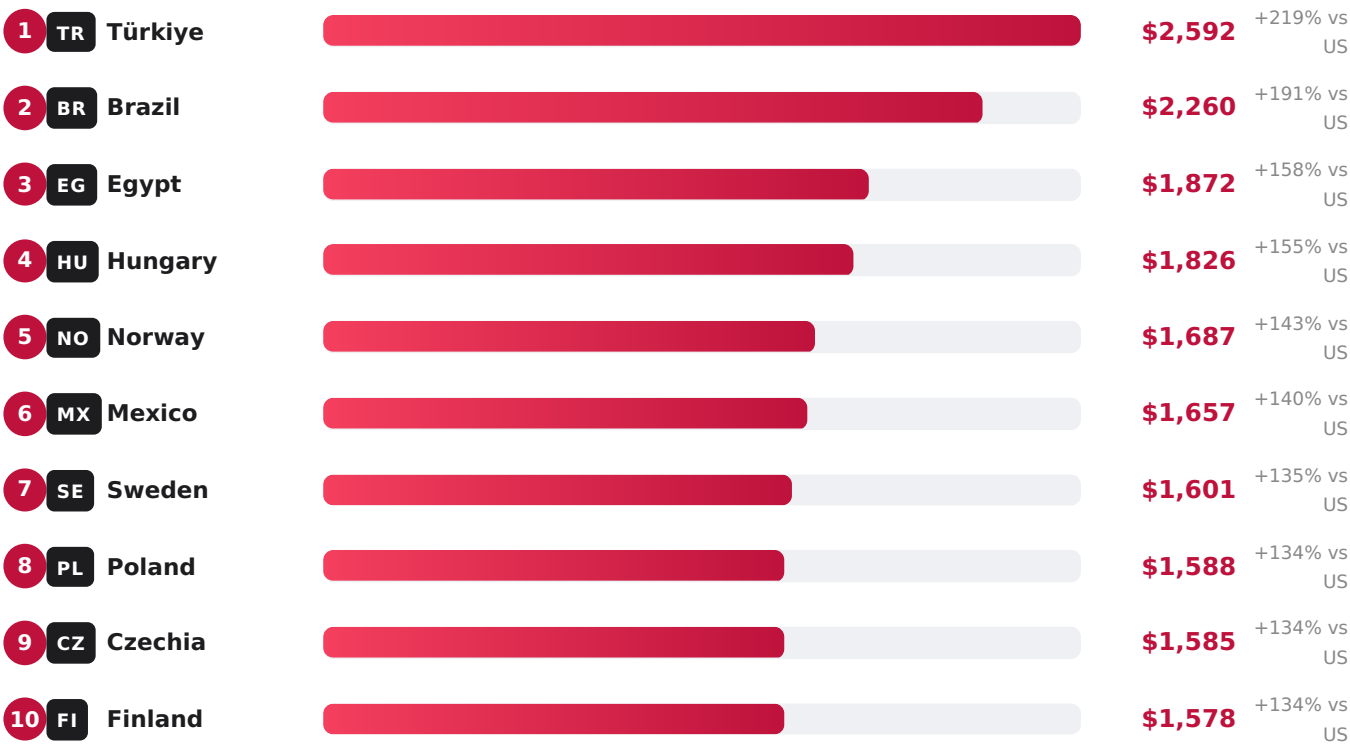
HIGHEST VS LOWEST PRICE

1.5B+

ACTIVE IPHONES WORLDWIDE

The 10 Most Expensive Countries to Buy an iPhone

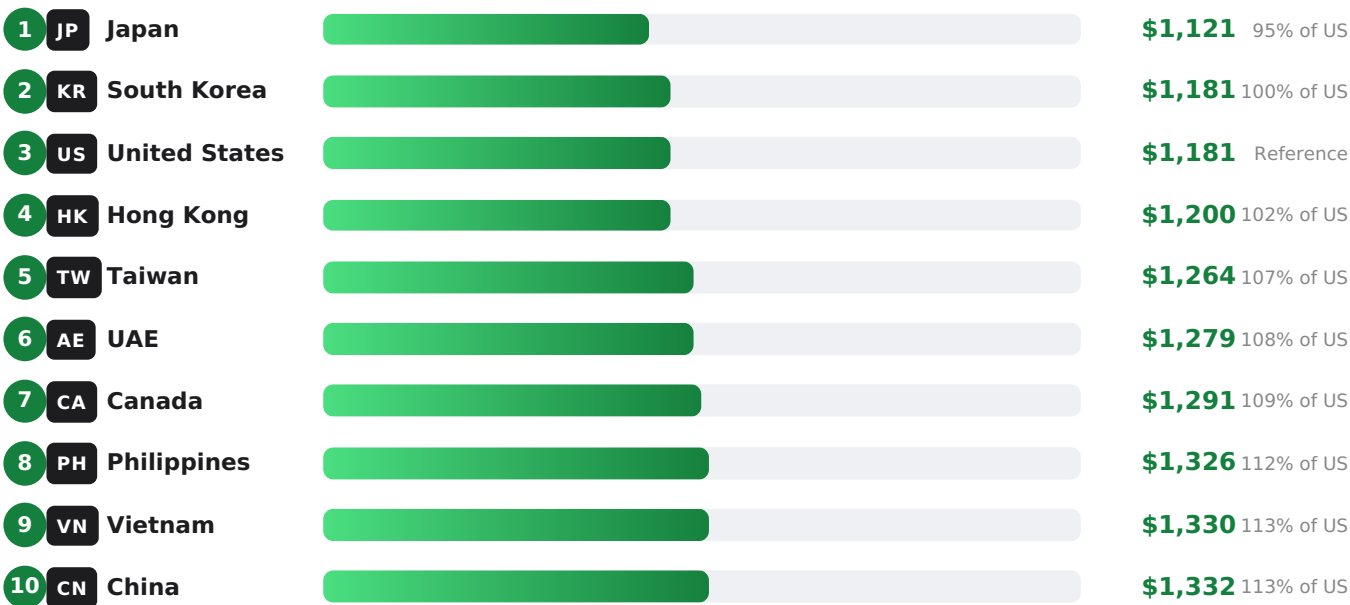
Pricing is based on the iPhone 17 Pro (256GB) converted to USD across 41 global markets, using Deutsche Bank Research's 2026 international price index. Bars are scaled relative to Türkiye, the world's most expensive market.



Why so expensive? Türkiye's outlier price reflects a 20% VAT stacked with special consumption taxes and a mandatory IMEI registration fee that applies even to phones bought abroad. Brazil and Egypt combine steep import duties with currency depreciation, while Hungary, Norway, Sweden, Poland, Czechia and Finland reflect Europe's high VAT regimes (as high as 27% in Hungary) layered onto the base Apple price.

The 10 Cheapest Countries to Buy an iPhone

At the opposite end of the spectrum, low-tax jurisdictions and strong currencies keep the same iPhone 17 Pro (256GB) far closer to Apple's underlying list price. Bars are scaled relative to Türkiye's \$2,592 for direct visual comparison with Part One.



Why so cheap? Japan benefits from a relatively low 10% consumption tax and a fiercely competitive domestic handset market. South Korea, Taiwan and Hong Kong are home to Apple's own component supply chain, minimizing shipping and import friction, while the U.S. remains Apple's home pricing base with no VAT added at checkout.

PRICE SPREAD

\$1,471

Gap between Türkiye's high and Japan's low for the same 256GB model

MULTIPLIER

2.3×

An iPhone costs more than twice as much in Türkiye as in Japan

EUROPE'S LOAD

27%

Hungary's VAT rate — the highest baked into any price on this list

Side-by-Side: High vs. Low Cost Markets

#	COUNTRY	PRICE (USD)	#	COUNTRY	PRICE (USD)
1	TR Türkiye	\$2,592	1	JP Japan	\$1,121
2	BR Brazil	\$2,260	2	KR South Korea	\$1,181
3	EG Egypt	\$1,872	3	US United States	\$1,181
4	HU Hungary	\$1,826	4	HK Hong Kong	\$1,200
5	NO Norway	\$1,687	5	TW Taiwan	\$1,264
6	MX Mexico	\$1,657	6	AE UAE	\$1,279
7	SE Sweden	\$1,601	7	CA Canada	\$1,291
8	PL Poland	\$1,588	8	PH Philippines	\$1,326
9	CZ Czechia	\$1,585	9	VN Vietnam	\$1,330
10	FI Finland	\$1,578	10	CN China	\$1,332

Methodology note. All figures reflect official Apple retail pricing for the iPhone 17 Pro (256GB) converted to USD at 2026 exchange rates, drawn from Deutsche Bank Research's "Mapping the World's Prices 2026" report. Prices include local VAT/GST where advertised, since that is what a consumer actually pays at checkout. Currency swings and tax changes mean rankings can shift over the course of a year.

Honorable mention — India. India doesn't crack the global top 10, but it's one of the most price-sensitive iPhone markets in the world: the same 256GB iPhone 17 Pro runs about \$1,427 there (121% of the U.S. price), a figure that looms large against local incomes and fuels the country's massive grey-market and EMI (installment) culture — explored on the following pages.

The iPhone Craze: Why the World Can't Stop Buying It

No consumer product in the history of modern commerce has managed to be simultaneously a status symbol in Mumbai, a professional tool in Manhattan, a rite of passage in Manila, and a small act of financial defiance in Ankara. The iPhone occupies all of these roles at once, and it does so while being sold, quite literally, at wildly different prices depending on which side of a border you happen to stand on. Understanding the "iPhone craze" means understanding two things that pull against each other: a single global product with a single global brand promise, and forty-one different national realities of tax, currency, income and aspiration that decide what that promise actually costs.

A Global Obsession by the Numbers

The scale of the iPhone's reach is difficult to overstate. Apple now has more than 2.5 billion active devices in use worldwide, with well over 1.5 billion of those being iPhones specifically. The iPhone alone accounts for roughly half of Apple's total quarterly revenue, and the company has continued to post record results even as the broader smartphone industry has cooled — global smartphone shipments were projected to decline through 2026 even as Apple's iPhone division kept growing. That divergence is itself telling: while cheaper Android handsets fight for share in a shrinking overall market, the iPhone has increasingly become the default aspirational purchase, insulated from the slowdown that has hit budget devices.

Android still dominates by raw device count, commanding roughly seven in every ten smartphones on Earth. But that statistic undersells the iPhone's actual cultural and commercial weight. iOS captures a dramatically outsized share of premium-segment spending, app-store revenue and upgrade-driven repeat purchases. In the United States, the iPhone's home market, it now accounts for close to three in every five phones in active use. In the United Kingdom the split between iPhone and Android is close to even. In China — home to fierce, well-funded domestic competitors like Xiaomi, Oppo and Vivo — the iPhone has recently pulled slightly ahead of Android in reported sales share, a remarkable feat in a market Apple was once thought to be losing.

The Anatomy of a Global Price Gap

What our ranking on the previous pages makes visible is that Apple's "global" pricing strategy is, in practice, a patchwork stitched together by each government's tax code. Apple sets a base international price in U.S. dollars, but what a shopper actually pays at the till is shaped by value-added tax, import duties, luxury or "sin" taxes on electronics, currency depreciation against the dollar, and — in extreme cases like Türkiye — special device-registration fees designed to discourage grey-market imports. The result is that the identical 256GB iPhone 17 Pro can cost more than twice as much in Istanbul as it does in Tokyo.

Europe illustrates this dynamic particularly well. Nine of the ten most expensive markets outside of Türkiye, Brazil, Egypt and Mexico are European Union or European Economic Area countries, where advertised retail prices already bake in VAT rates ranging from roughly 20% to 27%. Hungary's 27% VAT is the highest in the European Union and helps push its iPhone price more than 50% above the U.S. baseline. By contrast, Switzerland — long assumed to be an expensive country for almost everything — is actually one of Europe's cheaper iPhone markets, thanks to a VAT rate of just over 8%, one of the lowest on the continent.

Latin America tells a related but distinct story. Brazil's iPhone prices, the second-highest in the world, stem from a combination of steep import tariffs designed to protect (and tax) foreign electronics, a weaker currency, and layered state and federal sales taxes. Mexico, while cheaper than Brazil, still sits comfortably in the world's top ten most expensive markets for the same structural reasons. Both countries have, as a result, developed thriving traditions of Apple-shopping tourism, in which residents time trips to the United States around iPhone launches specifically to buy the device duty-free and bring it home in a suitcase.

The iPhone as Status Symbol in Emerging Markets

Nowhere is the iPhone's symbolic weight heavier than in large, price-sensitive emerging markets — India above all. Although India doesn't appear in the global top ten for absolute price, the iPhone 17 Pro's roughly \$1,427 sticker price is punishing when set against local incomes, and research into Indian consumer behavior consistently finds that the iPhone functions less as a communications tool than as a visible marker of arrival into a certain social and economic class. That symbolic value has spawned an entire secondary economy: no-cost EMI (equated monthly installment) financing plans that let buyers spread an iPhone's cost over 6, 12 or even 24 months, a brisk trade in imported and grey-market units that sidestep India's import duties, and a resale market so liquid that a two-year-old iPhone routinely holds more value, proportionally, than an equivalent Android flagship.

Southeast Asia shows a gentler version of the same pattern. In the Philippines and Vietnam, both of which land in our ten cheapest markets in absolute dollar terms, the iPhone remains a meaningfully aspirational purchase relative to average wages, driving similar installment-financing habits and a strong culture of buying "pre-loved" or refurbished units. China occupies a more unusual position: it is both one of the cheapest markets in dollar terms and one of the most fiercely contested, with Apple locked in an ongoing battle for premium-segment loyalty against Huawei, Xiaomi and Honor, all of which now field devices with iPhone-rivaling cameras and build quality at lower price points.

Why People Keep Paying the Premium

None of this explains why demand holds up so well even in the world's most expensive markets. Part of the answer is ecosystem lock-in: once a household owns an iPad, a Mac, AirPods and an Apple Watch, switching a single family member to Android creates real friction — lost iMessage threads, broken FaceTime calls, an incompatible smartwatch. Apple's famously high customer retention rate, reported at over 90% among existing iPhone owners, reflects how effectively that ecosystem discourages defection regardless of local price.

Resale value is another underappreciated driver. iPhones depreciate more slowly than almost any other consumer electronics product, which means the "true" cost of ownership — purchase price minus resale value two or three years later — is often more competitive than the sticker price suggests. This dynamic has fueled a booming global secondhand and refurbished iPhone market, increasingly framed by both Apple and resellers as a sustainability story: buying a two-generation-old refurbished iPhone has become a mainstream choice for environmentally conscious buyers, particularly younger ones, rather than a last resort for the cash-strapped.

Brand perception matters too. Across dozens of markets, surveys of Gen Z consumers repeatedly find the iPhone rated as more "premium," more reliable and more socially desirable than Android alternatives, even among respondents who cannot easily afford one. Camera quality, the blue-bubble/green-bubble messaging divide in the United States, and the simple visual instant-recognizability of an iPhone in a friend group all function as low-cost social signals that reinforce demand independent of hardware specifications.

The Launch-Day Ritual

Every September, Apple's iPhone launch still manages to generate a level of theater that no competitor has matched. Flagship Apple Store queues — once a purely American and Western European phenomenon — have gone thoroughly global, with lines outside stores in Singapore, Dubai, Sydney and Shanghai regularly rivaling those in New York and London. In markets where the device is significantly more expensive, launch day takes on an added edge: it is as much a subject of national economic conversation, debated on business news channels in terms of import-duty policy and currency strength, as it is a product release. Turkish and Brazilian media, in particular, treat each new iPhone's local price as a small annual referendum on the health of the national currency.

The Grey Market and the Arbitrage Trade

Wherever a large price gap exists between neighboring markets, an informal economy tends to grow up around it, and the iPhone is a textbook case. Professional and semi-professional "carriers" move iPhones in bulk from low-tax hubs like Hong Kong, Dubai and the United States into higher-tax markets such as India, Brazil and Turkey, often just below the personal-import thresholds that would otherwise trigger duty. Airport customs authorities in several of these countries have specifically flagged iPhone smuggling as a recurring enforcement problem around each September launch window, and Turkey's steep device-registration fee was designed, in large part, to close exactly this loophole by making it prohibitively expensive to activate a foreign-bought handset on a local network.

This arbitrage extends into legitimate retail as well. Duty-free shops inside international airports in Singapore, Dubai and Doha routinely sell iPhones at prices well below what travelers would pay at home, turning long-haul layovers into de facto shopping opportunities. Some resellers in high-tax markets build entire business models around bulk personal imports, advertising "US-spec" or "Hong Kong-spec" iPhones at a discount to official local retail — sometimes legally, sometimes in a regulatory grey zone that depends on warranty terms and network compatibility.

Looking Ahead

Two forces are likely to reshape this landscape over the next several years. First, currency volatility means today's cheap market can become tomorrow's expensive one with little warning — Japan's recent price increases, driven by a weakening yen even as its underlying tax advantage persists, are an early example. Second, Apple's rumored move into foldable hardware is expected to arrive at an even steeper premium than the standard Pro line, which will likely widen the gap between high-tax and low-tax markets even further in absolute dollar terms, even as percentage differentials stay roughly consistent.

What seems unlikely to change is the underlying appetite. Whether it is bought outright in Tokyo, financed over two years in Mumbai, smuggled home in a suitcase from Dubai, or queued for overnight in Sydney, the iPhone has settled into a strange dual identity: a mass-market product sold to well over a billion people, and a luxury good whose price tag is treated, in market after market, as newsworthy in its own right. That tension — between ubiquity and exclusivity — is precisely what keeps the craze alive.

Ultimately, the map of iPhone prices is really a map of something else entirely: how forty-one different governments choose to tax aspiration, how forty-one different currencies have weathered the last few years, and how forty-one different consumer cultures decide what a phone is supposed to say about the person holding it. Apple designs one device. The rest of the world decides what it costs, and what it means.

Sources & Methodology

- **Deutsche Bank Research** — "Mapping the World's Prices 2026," iPhone 17 Pro (256GB) price index across 41 markets, published August 2026.
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- **Statista** — Apple iPhone global market share, quarterly data, 2026.
- **World Population Review** — iPhone market share by country.
- **Accio Research** — iPhone global sales trends, market share by country, and consumer-behavior research on India's status-symbol dynamics, 2026.

Note on figures. This report is a curated summary for general informational purposes. Prices fluctuate with currency movements and local tax policy; figures reflect the most recent data available as of August 2026 and should be verified against Apple's official regional stores before making a purchasing decision.