

Venue 8 Pro

Disclosure: I am writing this post on my Ipad.

My friend DR sent me a [Dell Venue Pro](#) 8 inch tablet (32Gb) that I am testing to see if I can use it in Italy as a tool to backup my photographs and video. Since I will be hiking in Tuscany I want to keep the weight down and will, therefore, not be bringing my MacBook Pro as I normally do when I travel. My iPad can't do it since it will be 3 weeks of RAW images, *no way* I have that much drive space left and it doesn't read the RAW format so in order to review my images I would have to shoot RAW *and* JPG ! My goal was an option lighter than 5lbs, the weight of my MacBook Pro. And without buying an *Air* or anything like that! Multiple SD cards are also an expensive option due to the high bitrate of the video files recorded with my hacked GH2. I need a device that can manage all of my images, preferably something that would run Adobe *Lightroom*. The workflow will be to connect an external hard drive and a USB SD card reader to a device and use Lightroom to import the files.

At first I had asked DR about Dell or Apple laptops but they were all comparable in weight with my MBP that I had gotten from him 2 years ago for a trip to Paris. The Venue option was really last minute, I had been planning on a netbook. While looking around at the Dell website I noticed these small Windows tablets. I asked, he shipped. Awesome!

The first great piece of news was that the shipping weight was under 2lbs! Impressive. I immediately unboxed and plugged it in. Next step was to update the tablet to Windows 8.1 and also update any drivers. I noticed that the available space was under 10Gb! Lots of bloatware that I uninstalled. But not a lot of space. But enough for my purposes.

I installed *Lightroom* from my network, no problem. I downloaded and installed some apps from the Store but was unimpressed that *WordPress* (that I would use to update this website) is no longer to be found at the Store (unknown reason but the mobile *WordPress* app is discontinued for Windows WTF?). And no Google Map app but there are substitutes, notably GMap that I really like! I can minimize the app and then when I re-open, it automatically brings me back to where I was before – do you hear that Google Maps? Apps matching my iPad for travel, both TripAdvisor and

Booking, made it super easy to import all of my itinerary and booking information. So far, so good. Once installed and up and running, I found the Venue really quite impressive for its size.

The touch screen is responsive while in Tile mode but difficult to use on the desktop! It can be frustrating when trying to do basic functions. A mouse would definately come in handy, As would a keyboard since the 8inch screen has rather limited real estate. Those would add bulk though so no go. I did use *Office*: edit an *Excel* document and did minor edits in *Word* as well. I would not suggest using the Venue to replace other work tools without a keyboard and mouse.

I digress but having the ability to use MS Access database, network access, and input forms with the touchscreen could be quite useful to deploy in a team environment.

All in all the gestures are easy to understand and, coming from the iPad world, rather intuitive. Having the ability to organize your Tile screen is really great and implemented well.

I connected to my home network easily and tethered this device with both my iPad2 and my iPhone 4s. I am impressed with Windows 8! Functionality seems to be the priority in the design of the OS in Tile mode while also giving the user the ability to interact with a traditional desktop.

I downloaded VLC as a media player and set up the default folders to be my movie and tv folders on my home network. Portable access to all of my files just like my other devices, easily set up!

The not so good: I have mentioned the lack of hard drive space but a 64Gb is available and since this is a photography tool, I am using this primarily as a conduit between my camera and a backup hard drive. I need a few Gb for applications, but thats it.

The fatal flaw out-of-the-box is the inability to charge and hook up an external hard drive. This is needed on the road since overnight is the only time to fully power all of my camera and devices. It is also the time that I will need to backup my files and review my images. I assumed this functionality, connecting external hard drives while powering, would be central to a Windows-based machine? I guess that wireless connection is the preferred mode.

This is an issue when you're not sure if you will have wifi!**

Google to the rescue. I found [this](#) solution and ordered the pieces. 8 bucks. Really? They couldn't have included these with the Venue? Weird. More on this after they are delivered in 8-10 business days. Bummer. My two go-to computer places do not have any solutions, let alone lightweight ones.

Lastly, I was initially stumped by the fact that neither the front or back camera worked when I tried. The issue was a conflict between the hardware and Windows! I assumed that all of the hardware was functional, being made by robots and all, so I surmised that there was a device conflict. This is a Windows machine, after all! Once I uninstalled the Windows Camera update it worked fine. That took me 20 minutes to figure out.

More to come.

Step one is a success. I now have a light weight tablet that runs *Lightroom* and has the capacity to hard wire to an external hard drive.

Whether or not it will connect depends on those cables that I ordered. The ones that don't come standard with the tablet. Argh.

Step two will be to use the ordered cables to charge the Venue while simultaneously importing files using Lightroom to a USB connected external hard drive.

* update : 2 of the 3 cables shipped. 15-20 days to ship from Hong Kong. Double argh.

** second update - I am going to test out a 1Tb [Seagate wireless drive](#) that will provide wireless storage with its own network. Pricey option but if it works, fantastic!

Source: <https://www.idonthaveacoolname.com/venue-8-pro/>