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Local calls

As smartphone prices soar each year, *Time Out* highlights some lesser-known Chinese models that offer similar features at a much lower price

1 Lenovo K910 (Vibe Z)

Beijing-based Lenovo has continued to grow since it acquired IBM's PC business in 2005. Though it only started producing mobile phones in 2012, it is already the largest producer in Mainland China, with some highly competitive models across the range.

The exceptionally thin Vibe Z was one of the big talking points at this year's Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, but it has been available in China since last November. It features a huge 5.5-inch screen, giving almost tablet-sized viewing and full 1080p resolution.

This is a 4G-capable device for those seeking fast data, and even comes with dual sim slots. Add to this a powerful Snapdragon 800 quad-core processor, the Android 4.2 operating system and expandable memory via a microSD card, and you've got an impressive piece of kit. **2,388RMB** (suning.com)

2 ZTE Grand S

Though still a relative unknown outside of China, ZTE is now the

fourth-largest producer of mobile phones globally. Though now superseded by the Grand S II (announced earlier this year), the Grand S offers an impressive list of specifications. With a five-inch, full-HD screen, this is still a great option for films and surfing the web, and the body is just 6.9mm thick.

There's a 13-megapixel rear camera with LED flash and a two-megapixel front unit, support for 3G and 4G signals and a quad core processor. As it runs the older, 4.1 version of Android, it's not as fast as some more recent models but the phone does offer a generous internal memory (expandable via microSD) and comes at a reasonable price. **2,998RMB** (suning.com).

3 Huawei Ascend P6

The Shenzhen-based Huawei is the largest telecommunications equipment maker in the world. And though making phones might not be their main focus, they have produced some impressive models in recent years.

The Ascend P6 is a more pocket-friendly offering, both in price and in size. This features a 4.7-inch screen (1280x720pixels), and a slim 6.18mm body. There's no 4G support, but it is fully compatible with 3G across the globe. This is a stylish-looking phone with some quirky features, such as a super-sensitive screen that means you can operate it while wearing gloves – great for chilly Beijing winters.

1,940RMB (suning.com).

4 Hisense MIRA II T980

Based in Qingdao, Hisense produce a wide range of electrical equipment from white goods to optical components, under its own name and for third party companies. The MIRA II is the company's largest-screen smartphone to date, with a 5.5-inch 1280x720 pixel display. The eight-megapixel rear camera features an LED flash, and there is a two-megapixel front camera for selfies or video chat. The downside of its affordable price is the amount of RAM the phone offers, which is just 1GB, compared to 2GB in all the other models here. This results in a slower operation, especially with games and memory-heavy applications. **985RMB** (amazon.cn).

5 Oppo N1

Oppo is a relatively young electronics company from Dongguan with a range of products, including MP3 players, Blu-ray players and mobile phones. The N1 offers a unique feature in its rotating camera. This allows the 13-megapixel device, complete with flash, to be used through 209 degrees, allowing for high quality snaps of you or your

surroundings. It boasts a huge 5.9-inch, 1080p screen, a quad-core processor and a high-powered battery. This is a 3G device with 16GB of internal storage, expandable via microSD. A truly impressive phone that still outperforms bigger names at its price. **3,270RMB** (amazon.cn).

6 Xiaomi Mi3

Another Beijing-based company is Xiaomi, who produce a range of TV network and mobile devices. Xiaomi's operating system (MIUI) is unique to its phones, which gives it a distinct Apple feel.

The Xiaomi Mi3 is a sleek and powerful device housed in a thin magnesium alloy body. It features a five-inch, 1080p HD screen, a 13-megapixel rear camera with a dual LED flash and a two-megapixel, front-facing camera. There's a powerful quad-core processor and 16GB memory, but no SD slot for expansion. If the lack of 4G doesn't bother you, this is an excellent option. **1,999RMB** (amazon.cn).

7 OnePlus One

Hailed as the new king of Android, OnePlus only announced their first smartphone last month but it has already been making waves across the globe. The OnePlus One features a 1080p 5.5-inch display, the very latest Snapdragon quad-core processor. There's a 13-megapixel camera on the rear, a five-megapixel front camera and a choice of 16GB or 64GB capacities. It runs a modified version of the latest Android 4.4 operating system, and has 4G data connectivity and 4k video to boot. Class-leading specs at a fraction of the price of its competitors? No wonder OnePlus is making itself heard. **2,000RMB (16GB) 2,300RMB (64GB)**. Not yet in stores, visit www.oneplus.net for more.

