Why Laptop Prices Are Skyrocketing in 2026

The real story behind laptop prices 2026 and the AI driven price surge, based on TrueDime Research's analysis of public data.

Featured Snippet

Laptop prices 2026: why are they going up? Laptop prices rose sharply between 2024 and 2026 mainly because AI data centers absorbed the world's memory chip supply. As tech giants poured money into AI servers, DRAM and NAND flash, the memory and storage inside every laptop, became scarce and expensive. IDC forecasts global PC prices will rise about 17% in 2026, with no meaningful relief from the memory shortage before the end of 2027. The pain is worst in AI PCs, gaming laptops and commercial notebooks, and it hits hardest in import dependent markets like India, where a weaker rupee, GST and import rules have piled on top of the global squeeze.

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Laptop Prices 2026: The Short Version

If you've shopped for a laptop lately and felt a little jolt of sticker shock, you're not imagining it. Laptop prices 2026 really are up sharply, and according to TrueDime Research's analysis of industry data, they're going to keep climbing for a while yet.

Here's the twist. This isn't your typical inflation story. It's not really about shipping costs or tariffs or the usual "everything gets more expensive over time" logic. The biggest force behind the 2024 to 2026 laptop price surge is something most people never think about when they're comparing specs on Amazon or Flipkart: the memory chips inside the machine.

Those chips, DRAM and NAND flash, are also the backbone of the AI boom. Every AI data center, every server

cluster, every new wave of GPUs needs enormous amounts of high bandwidth memory. So when the world's memory makers had to choose between selling to Microsoft, Google, Amazon and Meta at AI server prices, or selling to laptop manufacturers at ordinary consumer prices, the laptop industry lost that fight.

Our analysis points to one conclusion. This was a memory led, AI induced cost shock that moved through the notebook value chain, and it got worse from there thanks to pricier premium designs, a wave of corporate laptop upgrades and, in markets like India, local taxes and currency swings stacked on top.

So how bad is it, really? IDC's June 2026 outlook is about as blunt as research firms get. Global PC prices are forecast to rise about 17% this year, even as unit shipments fall 11.3%. Omdia's July 2026 data shows PC prices up about 20% to 40% compared with a year earlier on comparable product lines. TrendForce ran the numbers on a hypothetical $900 mainstream notebook and found manufacturers might need to raise the price by nearly 40% just to protect their margins under today's costs.

None of that is speculation dressed up as fact. It's what the industry's own tracking firms, IDC, Gartner, Omdia and TrendForce, are telling their clients right now.

It Started With Volume Coming Back, Then Prices Broke

To understand 2026, you have to rewind to 2024 and 2025, when the story actually looked encouraging.

After a rough patch, the PC market was recovering. Counterpoint clocked Q1 2025 shipment growth at 6.7% year over year, and both Gartner and Omdia reported a solid 2025. Three things were driving that comeback: businesses replacing aging machines, the countdown to Windows 10's end of support, and early demand for so called AI PCs.

But that recovery didn't bring back the old normal. Instead, brands and distributors used the moment to lock in component supply early, stockpile inventory ahead of expected tariffs, and lean harder into higher priced configurations. It was a quiet bet that costs were about to rise, and it turned out to be the right one.

By 2026, that bet paid off for manufacturers and started costing consumers. IDC reported global PC shipments fell 4.9% year over year in Q2 2026, down to 68.2 million units (preliminary figures), with a full year decline of 11.3% forecast. Yet overall market value held up anyway, because prices were climbing faster than volumes were shrinking.

Analysts described the opening months of 2026 as a period of pre-emptive buying, shoppers and businesses rushing to purchase before the next round of memory driven price hikes landed.

> **What this actually means:** The PC market didn't shrink because people stopped wanting laptops. It shrank because laptops got more expensive, and normal price sensitivity finally kicked back in.

The Real Culprit: AI Ate the World's Memory Supply

This is the heart of the story, so it's worth slowing down here.

Every laptop needs DRAM (working memory) and NAND flash (storage). Those same components, in industrial scale form, are also what power AI servers, specifically a specialized and very expensive category called HBM, or high bandwidth memory, which sits at the core of every AI accelerator chip.

Micron said in late 2025 that it was close to selling all of the high bandwidth memory it would make in 2026, and in July 2026 SK hynix's CEO warned that 2027 could bring the most severe memory supply crunch the industry has ever seen.

Why does that matter for your laptop? Because building HBM chips eats up silicon wafer capacity that would otherwise go toward ordinary DRAM, the kind that goes into consumer notebooks. TrendForce put it directly: growing HBM consumption was compressing available capacity for conventional DRAM, which strengthened suppliers' pricing power and extended the price climb through 2027.

The scale of AI spending explains why memory makers didn't blink at walking away from the laptop business. Estimates put 2026 capital spending by Microsoft, Google, Amazon and Meta well above $600 billion combined, and TSMC has said demand for AI accelerator wafers is projected to grow 11-fold between 2022 and 2026. Against numbers like that, laptop manufacturers just aren't the priority customer anymore unless they're big enough to sign long term supply deals.

The Price Numbers Behind the Chips

The memory pricing swings TrendForce tracked over this period are genuinely dramatic:

Period	Conventional DRAM price movement	NAND flash price movement
Q2 2024	+13% to +18%	+15% to +20%
Q4 2025 (September outlook)	+8% to +13% (13% to 18% including HBM)	+5% to +10%
Q2 2026 (forecast)	+58% to +63% quarter over quarter	+70% to +75% quarter over quarter
Q3 2026 (expected, cooling slightly)	+13% to +18% quarter over quarter	+10% to +15% quarter over quarter

Source: TrendForce memory pricing outlooks for Q2 2024, Q4 2025, Q2 2026 and Q3 2026 (see Sources below).

Even the "cooling" numbers in that table are still steep increases, just smaller ones than the second quarter's shock. That's a cost surge large enough to blow straight through the normal profit cushions notebook makers build into their pricing.

Storage tells a similar story. TrendForce projected AI related SSD demand rising from about 5% of total NAND consumption in 2024 to about 9% in 2025, with enterprise SSDs increasingly claiming capacity that used to go to consumer devices. There was a brief window in early 2025 when client SSD prices actually dipped because of inventory clearance, but by late 2025 and into 2026 that trend had firmly reversed.

Processors and graphics chips added further pressure too, though the public data here is thinner. In March 2026, TrendForce noted that Intel had already raised prices on some entry level and older generation notebook

CPUs by over 15%, with more increases planned. On the graphics side, the clearest evidence shows up in finished device pricing. In India, ASUS's 2025 ROG Strix G16 gaming laptops start at ₱144,990, with the top configuration listed at ₱159,990. All of that points to a gaming laptop segment where discrete GPUs, GDDR memory and heavier cooling systems are stacking cost on top of each other.

Laptop Prices 2026: Not All Laptops Got Hit the Same Way

One of the most useful things about the TrueDime report is that it resists the temptation to say "all laptops got more expensive." They didn't, not equally, and not for the same reasons.

AI PCs took the brunt of it. These are laptops built around new neural processing units, larger RAM pools and newer SSDs, and Gartner expects them to jump from 31% of worldwide PC shipments in 2025 to about 55% in 2026. Because AI PCs entered the market at higher price points to begin with, their growing share of the market mechanically pushed average prices up even before the memory shortage fully bit.

Gaming laptops saw the most visible sticker shock. Bundling discrete GPUs, high refresh displays, bigger batteries and elaborate cooling makes this category especially exposed to component inflation across the board.

Commercial notebooks rose for a different reason: Windows 10. Microsoft ended support for the operating system on October 14, 2025, forcing a global wave of business upgrades. Companies had little choice but to keep buying, since delaying a replacement created real cybersecurity and management risk, which meant businesses were far less price sensitive than everyday consumers.

Mainstream consumer laptops rose too, but more subtly, often through spec inflation (higher baseline configurations) and shallower discounts rather than dramatic list price jumps.

Chromebooks are harder to read. There is little public data on how they were affected, so we have not drawn conclusions about them.

> **A few numbers worth remembering:** AI PCs made up 31% of global PC shipments in 2025, and that's forecast to reach about 55% in 2026. In India, AI notebook shipments were up 96.1% year over year in Q1 2026, and premium notebooks over $1,000 were up 70.1% in the same quarter. IDC's overall forecast for global PC average selling prices in 2026 sits at about plus 17%.

Apple's own pricing offers a clean, real world proof point for the whole thesis. In June 2026, Apple raised Mac and iPad prices and pointed to the surge in memory demand from AI data centers. The base MacBook Air went from $1,099 to $1,299 in the U.S. That's about as close to a smoking gun as the evidence gets, a major OEM known for holding prices steady publicly pinning an increase on memory costs.

Who's Winning, Who's Absorbing the Pain

Scale matters enormously in a supply constrained market. The companies that could sign long term memory

contracts early protected themselves. Everyone else had to pass costs straight to shoppers.

Brand	What the evidence shows	Pricing posture
Lenovo	Signed long term memory supply deals in late 2025 to get ahead of the 2026 price surge	Locking in supply early helps protect its pricing
ASUS	ROG Strix G16 (2025) from ₱144,990 in India, with a strong gaming and premium mix	A gaming and premium mix leaves it more exposed to GPU and memory costs
Apple	Raised Mac and iPad prices in June 2026, citing memory costs	Raised prices and cited memory costs
Microsoft	Copilot+ PCs launched from $999, setting the early benchmark for AI PC pricing	Launched the Copilot+ AI PC category at a premium price point

Source: Company announcements and press reports, 2025 to 2026 (see Sources below).

Gartner's 2025 global rankings put Lenovo first, followed by HP, Dell, Apple, ASUS and Acer. And it's the biggest of these players, Lenovo included, that were reported to be locking in long term memory contracts even as prices climbed. Smaller competitors, without that kind of negotiating leverage, had fewer options besides raising prices or accepting thinner margins.

India: Where the Global Shock Hits Hardest

If you want to see how laptop prices 2026 land on a real shopping cart, India is the clearest case study in the whole report, which is exactly why TrueDime gave it separate treatment.

India's traditional PC market shipped 14.4 million units in 2024, then set a record with 15.9 million units in 2025. By Q1 2026, IDC reports shipments hit 4.4 million units, up 31.1%, with notebook shipments alone rising 55.4%. On the surface that looks like a booming market. Underneath, it's something more complicated: premiumization, where growth doesn't come from more people buying laptops, but from buyers being pushed toward pricier machines. Premium notebooks over $1,000 jumped 70.1% year over year, and AI notebooks rose a striking 96.1%.

IDC's own analyst said prices rose over the past two quarters and are expected to rise further in the coming months.

Four Local Forces Piling on the Global Squeeze

A weaker rupee is the first one. The Indian rupee fell about 4.7% in 2025, its steepest annual decline in three years. Because most high value laptop components are effectively priced in dollars, a weaker rupee raises local landed costs unless a brand fully hedges or absorbs the difference.

Then there's GST inclusive pricing. Indian retailers display prices that already include GST, with laptops generally sitting in an 18% slab. That means every underlying cost increase gets compounded on top of a tax inclusive base before a shopper ever sees the number.

Import management rules add a third layer. India shifted from laptop import licensing in 2023 toward a registration based import management system. The evidence suggests this system isn't the main driver of India's price increases, but it did add real compliance and sourcing complexity at a moment when component supply was already stretched thin.

And finally, discount driven retail tends to mask the base price. Amazon's Great Indian Festival, Flipkart's Big Billion Days, Croma's exchange bonus campaigns and Reliance Digital's multi bank cashback deals all soften the blow at checkout. But, and this is a subtle point worth stressing, promotions don't erase inflation. They just redistribute it across calendar periods and customer types. A shopper who buys during a festival sale might not feel the increase. A shopper who buys in an off cycle month feels the full weight right away.

> **Who got hit hardest in India:** Students and budget buyers became more dependent on festival sales, bank offers and no cost EMI plans. Gamers and creators faced the steepest rupee value increases, since their machines combine nearly every expensive component at once. SMBs and government buyers were squeezed harder than large enterprises, and IDC specifically noted elevated prices caused desktop order deferments and cancellations in Q1 2026. Large enterprises, on the other hand, kept buying regardless, since delaying a Windows 10 or AI transition upgrade carried its own security risk.

One interesting side effect: as new device affordability eroded, India's refurbished device market expanded. Cashify has grown to more than 250 outlets across 95 cities, and European platform Back Market projected over €3 billion in transaction volume for 2025. Microsoft's $30 a year Extended Security Updates program for Windows 10 gave some users yet another way to delay a purchase rather than absorb 2026's higher prices right away.

Shipping, Trade Policy and the Pieces That Didn't Really Drive the Increase

It's worth being precise here, because it's tempting to blame everything on tariffs and shipping, and the evidence doesn't fully back that up.

Shipping did add cost, but it's a secondary factor. The Drewry World Container Index stood at $4,639 per 40 foot container in early July 2026, its highest level since September 2024, and the World Bank earlier found that Red Sea disruption had pushed global shipping costs 141% above pre-crisis levels. That raised landed costs and complicated inventory timing, but it's not the core story.

Direct tariffs were, somewhat surprisingly, not the main driver either. In April 2025, the U.S. exempted computers, laptops, semiconductor devices, memory chips and flat-panel displays from its reciprocal tariffs. What tariffs did do was create uncertainty, pushing brands to change ordering behavior, diversify manufacturing geography and stockpile inventory, which indirectly fed into pricing decisions even without a direct tax on finished laptops.

The takeaway is that memory scarcity did the heavy lifting on price. Trade policy and shipping mostly shaped when and how those costs showed up.

Laptop Prices 2026 and Beyond: What's Coming in 2027

Here's the part that matters most if you're weighing whether to buy now or wait.

2027 looks tight, not better. IDC said in June 2026 that it saw no meaningful memory supply relief before the end of 2027. TrendForce expects the upward pricing pressure from HBM related wafer consumption to persist through the year. SK hynix's CEO warned in July 2026 that 2027 could be the most severe memory supply crunch the industry has ever seen. On the current evidence, a return to 2023 style budget friendly laptop pricing looks unlikely anytime soon.

2028 is genuinely uncertain in both directions. There are real relief mechanisms in motion. TSMC plans nine phases of wafer fab and advanced packaging construction in 2026, and Micron has committed more than $250 billion to new U.S. fab investment. Micron's CEO also expects the HBM market to reach about $100 billion by 2028. But these relief valves are competing against enormous structural demand. AI isn't a temporary spike in that picture, it's a permanent, dominant customer for the world's memory supply.

Three Risks That Could Make Things Worse

There's a chance of deeper memory scarcity if data center and sovereign AI investment accelerates again beyond current projections. There's also the risk of a repeat geopolitical or freight shock, whether that's a renewed Red Sea disruption or a new round of tariffs without electronics exemptions. And there's broader energy and macroeconomic pressure to consider, since AI related capital spending is now large enough to affect wider inflation and utility costs.

What This Means If You're Buying

Our practical guidance on laptop prices 2026 boils down to a few clear points.

- If you need a laptop for essential work now, buying sooner rather than later is reasonable, since prices aren't expected to fall meaningfully before 2028 at the earliest, and even then some easing is plausible, not a return to old price levels.
- In India specifically, timing a purchase around festival sales and bank offers still matters, but understand these deals redistribute cost rather than eliminate it.
- For gaming and creator laptops, expect the steepest increases to keep going, since these devices concentrate almost every inflated component in one machine.
- If your current laptop still works fine, extended security update programs like Microsoft's for Windows 10, or the growing refurbished market, are legitimate ways to delay a purchase until supply conditions improve.

Key Takeaways on Laptop Prices 2026

- **Laptop prices 2026 are rising because of a memory shortage, not ordinary inflation.**
- **The core cause isn't generic inflation, it's an AI driven memory shortage.** AI data centers absorbed the DRAM and NAND supply that used to go to consumer laptops.

- **IDC forecasts about a 17% rise in global PC average selling prices for 2026,** alongside an 11.3% drop in shipments, meaning prices are rising even as demand cools.
- **AI PCs, gaming laptops and commercial notebooks were hit hardest,** while the impact on budget laptops is harder to see in public data.
- **Windows 10's end of support on October 14, 2025 drove a wave of price insensitive commercial buying** that added to the pressure.
- **India faced the same global shock, amplified locally** by a weaker rupee, GST inclusive pricing, import management rules and a discount heavy retail culture that masks, but doesn't erase, rising base prices.
- **Direct laptop tariffs were not a major driver** of the global price increase.
- **No meaningful relief is expected before the end of 2027,** with only cautious optimism for partial easing by 2028.

FAQs

Is it a good time to buy a laptop in 2026?

If you need one for work or study now, waiting probably won't save you money. Laptop prices 2026 look set to stay high through 2027, with only tentative signs of relief in 2028.

Why did AI cause laptop prices to rise?

Laptop prices 2026 rose because AI data centers need massive amounts of high bandwidth memory, and that consumes the same silicon wafer capacity used for the ordinary DRAM inside laptops. As memory makers redirected capacity and pricing power toward AI customers, consumer notebook supply tightened and got more expensive.

Are gaming laptops more expensive than other categories?

Yes. Gaming laptops combine discrete GPUs, GDDR memory, larger batteries and elaborate cooling systems, all categories seeing significant cost inflation, which makes them the most visibly affected segment.

Why are laptop prices in India rising faster than elsewhere?

Laptop prices 2026 in India reflect the same global memory shortage as everywhere else, but it's intensified by a weaker rupee (down about 4.7% in 2025), GST inclusive retail pricing and import management compliance requirements, even though promotional discounting can temporarily mask the increases.

Did tariffs cause the laptop price increase?

Not directly. Tariff uncertainty influenced sourcing and ordering behavior, but memory scarcity was the primary price driver.

When will laptop prices go back down?

Laptop prices 2026 are unlikely to ease before the end of 2027, with only cautious potential for partial easing in 2028 if planned semiconductor capacity expansions come through on schedule.

What is an "AI PC" and why does it cost more?

AI PCs include dedicated neural processing units, higher RAM baselines and newer SSDs designed to run AI

features locally. Those higher specs mean AI PCs enter the market at a higher price point than traditional laptops, and their growing market share is pulling average prices up across the board.

Conclusion: Laptop Prices 2026 in a Nutshell

It's tempting to file the laptop prices 2026 story under the same broad "everything costs more now" story as groceries or rent. But that's not really what happened here. This was a structural shift in who gets priority access to the world's memory chips, and laptops lost out to AI data centers.

Our reading is that the 2024 to 2026 price increase is best understood as a structural repricing of compute hardware. AI infrastructure didn't just create a temporary shortage, it permanently changed the profit hierarchy of the semiconductor industry, and notebooks are now competing with hyperscalers for the same upstream resources. Add premiumization, a Windows 10 driven refresh cycle and, in markets like India, currency and tax dynamics, and you get real, measurable price increases that show up at checkout, not just in abstract industry reports.

The honest, evidence backed answer to "will laptop prices come down soon?" is probably not before 2028, and even then only partially. If there's a silver lining, it's that this analysis gives buyers something rare in tech journalism: a clear eyed account of why prices actually moved, grounded in sourced data rather than guesswork.

Sources

The figures on laptop prices 2026 in this article come from the sources below. Where a number is a forecast or a preliminary estimate, the text says so.

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This article is based on TrueDime Research's analysis of the sources above.