

Dive In With DIGITAL CAMERAS

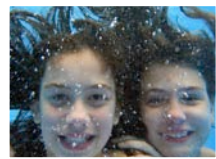
By Michael Vatalaro



These waterproof, digital, point-and-shoot cameras are easy to use and won't be damaged by the marine environment, whether you shoot on the boat, in the water – or under it!

Humidity, shocks and bumps, and the ever-present threat of being dropped

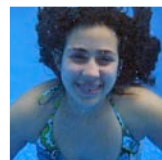
overboard have shortened the lifespans of many MP3 players, cell phones, and laptops. But



your digital camera doesn't have to be a casualty. Until recently, cameras suitable for use in and around the water either required an expensive housing built for diving, or were cheap disposables that never seemed to capture what



your eye saw while snorkeling or splashing in the shallows. But now several manufacturers have waterproof cameras in their lineups that take high-quality photos above and below the water, are compact, easy to use, and are waterproof down to 10 to 33 feet depending on the model. Our editors have gathered five of the most popular models for a few days of field testing. Here are our impressions.



Canon Powershot D10 A fast favorite, the D10 impressed us with its low-light shooting abilities — it didn't automatically resort to firing the flash to take photos in a dimly lit living room. The result was a natural-looking photo instead of the common washed-out look. Outdoors, the D10 continued to excel with intuitive controls and a rugged feel. It's built tough as well — waterproof to 33 feet, rated to survive up to a four-foot fall and temps as low as 14 degrees — second only to the Olympus in our lineup. The gaskets and seals that waterproof the various access points on the camera are thick and did a good job keeping water out. At 12.1 megapixels, it's tied for highest resolution. The lens can zoom from 35-105mm and the aperture ranges from f/2.8-4.9. \$329.99.

Pentax Optio W60 The Optio W60 features the widest zoom range of any camera in our test at 28-140mm and a 10-megapixel rating. In the middle of the pack price-wise, it offers video recording, is waterproof to 13 feet, and freeze resistant to 14 degrees, much like the more expensive cameras. Auto-locking compartment doors keep water and dust out, while its aluminum and polycarbonate frame keep it light, but tough. A 2.5-inch LCD display with a glare-reducing coating allows you to see your shots clearly, even in bright sunlight. \$269.99.

FujiFilm Finepix Z33WP The smallest and sleekest camera in our lineup, the Finepix Z33WP, features very simple to use, rubberized control buttons, rather than the more common selector wheels. Though only waterproof to 10 feet, we liked the feel of this camera in the hand, and it took very crisp photos, above and below the water, with strong contrast. Rated at 10 megapixels, with a 35-105mm zoom lens and a 2.7-inch display, this is also the cheapest camera in our lineup. \$179.95.

Olympus Stylus Tough 8000 Olympus didn't just put "Tough" in the name, they put it in the camera. Waterproof to 33 feet, shockproof to 6.6 feet, and crush resistant to 220 pounds, this metal-cased beauty took some of the best photos in our group. It captured more detail in the underwater shots than the other cameras in our test and like the Canon, did an excellent job keeping water out of the battery and card compartments. This camera has a nifty feature called "tap control" that allows you to give it a quick flick with a fingertip to activate preset features. Tap your way through menu settings without touching a button, perfect for those times where weather, or water temperature requires gloves. Other features include a 2.7-inch LCD display, 28-102mm zoom lens, and a 12-megapixel rating. \$379.99

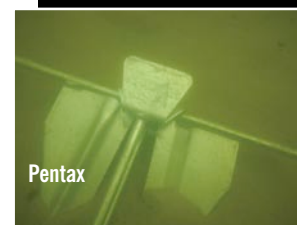
Panasonic Lumix DMC-TS1 Panasonic packed a lot into a little package. Waterproof to around 10 feet, shock resistant, and rated at 12.1 megapixels, it also offers video recording. We liked the solid feel, better-than-average zoom range (28-128mm) and the Intelligent Auto settings, which also automatically switches the camera to underwater mode when dunked. It's a little thing, but we found in testing that the underwater modes color corrected automatically for the loss of red light. Forgetting to switch modes led to greenish shots on other models. Set the Lumix to auto and forget it. \$399.95.

Liquid Image VideoMask 310 Want to record your next snorkeling trip and keep your hands free at the same time? The Videomask 310, a dive mask with a digital camera built in, records five-megapixel images on a micro SD card, and shoots 720 x 480 video at 30 frames per second. It's waterproof to 33 feet and easy to operate, with just two buttons — one to select video or still mode, and the other to shoot or stop and start the recording. With practice you can frame shots just by looking at your subject. Scuba divers will like the 320 model (\$99.95), rated to depths of 115 feet. To see video of an editor coming face to face with a territorial bluegill, check out the digital edition at www.BoatUS.com/Magazine.

Bottom Line While we did see differences in the quality of underwater photos taken by the cameras in our test group, most were slight, and only the Olympus truly stood out, with sharper-than-average focus, and better color reproduction. Any of the cameras in the group will produce good photos on land, and decent snapshots underwater. Throw in their increased durability and ability to survive and thrive underwater, and we think an underwater digital camera would make a great addition to your onboard gear.



Canon



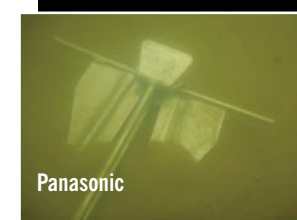
Pentax



FujiFilm



Olympus



Panasonic



Our editors took several photos with each camera of different objects underwater, including an eye chart, a color wheel, and an anchor. We shot in both a freshwater lake and in a pool to see how the cameras' underwater modes handled the different levels of light and clarity.

