

Bridge Cameras

<http://www.digitalcameraworld.com/2015/03/10/bridge-camera-tips-using-full-potential/>

Bridge cameras tend to sit in the compact camera category in the shops, but, to look at them you'd think that they were more akin to compact system cameras or DSLRs.

However, they have much smaller sensors (on the whole) than cameras with interchangeable lenses. This allows them to have a huge zoom ratio, and while the 83x zoom of the P900 is unique for now, those with up to 50 or 60x zooms are becoming more commonplace.

Pros of using a bridge camera

Bridge cameras are ideal for a large number of photographers, but are often marketed towards travelling and holidaying photographers.

That's because you don't need to carry a bulky and heavy piece of kit around to get the huge zoom ratio that the equivalent DSLR or CSC kit would require, plus they're also much, much cheaper too.

For example, having a look at the Canon PowerShot SX60, which offers an equivalent focal length of 21-1365mm (65x optical zoom).

To even get close to that reach on your DSLR, you'll need Canon's EF 800mm f/5.6 L USM lens – which costs a whopping £9,995 and doesn't give you all the focal lengths in between AND you'll need to seriously work on your biceps to lift it.

Of course, nobody is claiming that the image quality will be as high as £10k kit can provide, but at just a tiny fraction of the price, it's still a pretty impressive feat.

Another benefit of using a bridge camera, compared with an ordinary point and shoot, is that many will offer full manual control, and in some cases, raw format shooting.

So, they make great alternatives for enthusiasts who still want to control every element of picture taking without the bulk and hassle of a DSLR – or they make good second cameras for DSLR owners when they are trying to travel light.

You may also find that you just prefer the handling of a bridge camera, with their large, chunky grips and DSLR like buttons and dials (some offer more than others) when compared to the flat bodies of a point and shoot style camera.

Many will also offer a viewfinder, which is handy if you're used to traditional framing, rather than using a screen – or when using the camera in particularly bright conditions.

Limitations of using a bridge camera

There are of course downsides to using a bridge camera. The biggest perhaps being the limitations that come with using a very small sensor, when compared to those you might find in a DSLR or compact system camera.

While these small sensors facilitate the huge zoom ratios, they also generally leave you with less detailed images and tend not to perform so well in low light situations .

Generally speaking, most bridge cameras will also have a narrow maximum aperture, even at the widest point of the lens. This will rise to even narrower at the telephoto end of the lens, thanks to the limitations of low-cost zoom lenses.

There are of course some notable exceptions to this rule – such as the Panasonic FZ200 which features a 24x optical zoom and an f/2.8 constant aperture, but that zoom ratio is reasonably limited compared to some of the 50, 60 and even 83x behemoths on the market.

While many bridge cameras do have viewfinders, they are not always up to scratch and you may find that you're less inclined to use them than the screen anyway.

[If a viewfinder is something you really want](#), it's worth looking out for something with both a reasonably large physical size and resolution, more of which are starting to come onto the market.

Another problem is that image blur occurring at the far end of the telephoto lens is also a very real possibility when using a bridge camera.

Many of these models will have advanced [optical image stabilisation systems](#) – but not all of them do, and those that do are not always 100% effective.