

Olympus Tough TG-6 and Ikelite housing

by Phil Rudin

Ikelite Underwater Systems is a USA based company and during its fifty plus years in business Ikelite has expanded its distribution network to cover most areas of the world. Ikelite has a large and loyal customer base founded on excellent customer support and product reliability.

At DEMA 2019 Ikelite debuted a new housing for the Olympus Tough TG-6. Ikelite currently has a line of over fifty housings for compact digital cameras (also called point-and-shoot cameras) for Canon, Leica, Nikon, Olympus, Panasonic and Sony compacts.

The Olympus TG-6 is also sold as a kit including the camera and housing or camera, housing, tray and Strobe deluxe kit which includes DS 51 strobe, fiber optic adapter with cord and an arm, clamp and mount.

Olympus Tough TG-6 Camera

If you are looking for a camera and housing system for well under \$1000.00 you should look no further. The Olympus Tough TG-6 is arguably the best value you will find in today's market.

The TG-6 has a 25-100mm F/2-4.9 zoom (35mm equivalent) 4X optical zoom lens which focuses in macro mode to 1cm. It has a new 12 megapixel 1/2.3" CMOS back illuminated sensor, ISO 100-12800, and the new TruePic VIII image processor for better low light performance and excellent image quality for its size.

Some of the key features include Raw and JPEG stills, 4k 30p and 1080 120p video, a faster

and more accurate auto focus system even in the macro modes, built-in Wi-Fi, GPS, a three inch 460,000 pixel 100% LCD screen, image stabilization, manual flash options with high flash sync speeds to go along with the up to 20 frames burst speed rate and the camera alone has a depth rating of 15 meters (50 feet).

The TG-6 is also freezeproof to temperatures as low as 10° C / 14° F and shockproof for falls from 2.1m/7 feet high. The camera is also dustproof and crushproof making this an ideal all environments camera for many outdoor activities.

The TG-6 also has manual focus with focus peeking which is great for those hard to focus super macro subjects. The TG-6 still lacks a full manual exposure control mode, no manual control mode and custom white balance in movie mode. For advanced shooters full manual mode is the norm and I missed that feature during my review. The TG-6 retails for around \$449.00 in the US and now on sale for \$379.00 still in black or red.

Ikelite TG-6 Housing

The Ikelite housing for the Olympus TG-6 uses the same housing as the TG5 and the same housing design features used in Ikelite's DSLR and Mirrorless housings.

It features an opaque gray ABS-PC polycarbonate material for the front section of the housing with a transparent DSLR/Mirrorless style polycarbonate housing back. This attractive gray housing color matches the current Ikelite DS strobe



line and always attracts the attention of other divers and photographers when I am in the field.

The new housing color shades the camera to provide extra protection from the sun during long boat rides. The housing is designed with a robust depth rating of 60 meters (200 ft) and is positively buoyant in fresh water without any accessories added. The bottom of the housing has two 1/4-20 mounting points for camera trays, tripod and other accessories.

The TG6 housing has a threaded port mounting system for the new FCON-T02 Fisheye Kit for the TG 5 & TG6 cameras. This kit sells for around \$575.00 and includes the Olympus FCON-T02 Fisheye Converter and the Ikelite threaded wide angle dome port which I used during this review.

This new port and Fisheye lens system also features a dome shade which can be removed when zooming to the circular fisheye end of the range. Removing the shade prevents vignetting in the corners of the image.

The housing can also be used with the glass lens port which has the standard 67mm (3 inch)

Diver at the bottom of Ginnie Ball Room, Florida, Olympus TG6, Ikelite housing, Two Ikelite DS-51 Flash's, 4.5mm Circular Fisheye end of lens, ISO-320, F/8, 1/30th sec



mounting threads for accessories like close-up lenses and wide angle adapters. This system allows you to just push the accessory dome port over the front of the lens mount and then secure it in place with three small screws.

The WD-3 dome has a 0.75X conversion factor to correct for the refractive magnification of the housings flat glass port. The port is made from optical grade acrylic and is also depth rated to 60 meters. This dome can be removed and installed underwater to allow for a full range of use during any dive.

The WD-3 dome ships with a neoprene cover and a lanyard with cord lock. Wide angle lenses like the Inon UWL-H100 and others will also work threaded to the 67mm mounting threads on the front of the housing or by using a bayonet adapter.

The Ikelite TG-6 housing is a clam-shell style with the robust locking system on the left-hand side of the housing and the hinge on the right. Push controls on the top and bottom of the locking buckle must be depressed before the lock will disengage allowing the housing to be opened.



Diver in the entrance to Ginnie Ball Room, Florida, Olympus TG6, Ikelite housing, Two Ikelite DS-51 Flash's, 9.1mm full frame fisheye, ISO-100, F/4.5, 1/50th sec. RGBBlue off camera blue lighting

The camera does not require a tray and simply pushes into the housing where it is held firmly in place. All of the useful push buttons and control wheels on the camera can be accessed from the housing controls. Since the housing is quite small the controls on the right rear of the housing are very close to each other. Each push button has the function it is assigned on the top of the button but they are difficult to see in many conditions so you should familiarize

yourself with the controls you expect to use before entering the water.

The video start/stop button is placed above the mode control dial and has a red dot so it is out of the way and unlikely to be activated by accident.

Most of Ikelite's compact housings support flashes that are fired using fiber optic cords. These ultra compact housings just don't have room for a sync cord port and the excellent Ikelite TTL converters.

The TG-6 housing has the two optical ports on the top left side of the housing. These can be used with a wide variety of flash brands that are fired by fiber optics or with the Ikelite DS-flash using the Ikelite fiber optic converter part #4401.1 and fiber optic cord #4501. The Ikelite converter inserts into the sync port on the flash and allows the fiber cords to be used.

The Ikelite converter does not allow TTL control of the strobes so remember to set the strobes to one of the manual power settings on your particular DS-flash. In the unlikely event that water enters the housing the chance of any damage to the camera is remote because of its excellent weather sealing and 15 meter depth rating. I have witnessed two floods of TG-Tough cameras housings (both pilot error) during my workshops in Cozumel with no damage to the camera.

The TG-6 housing ships with a wrist strap, port cover, o-ring, silicone lube and in the US a one year warranty. With the kit in addition to the housing you also get the Red Olympus TG-6 camera and all it is equipped with. The Ikelite instruction manual can be downloaded at ikelite.com.

The Ikelite TG-6 housings retails for \$299.00 and as a kit for \$749.00 in the US. The fiber optic converter retails for \$125.00 and the fiber cord retails for \$80.00 US.

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Field testing the Ikelite TG-6 Housing

For my review I used the Ikelite TG-6 kit with the red camera, Ikelite action tray II with action tray II extension and right handle, four inch flash arms and clamps, along with two Ikelite DS-51 flash's with fiber optic converters and the flash defusers which are included with each flash.

I used a two flash configuration and a single flash over the top of the lens port during the review. With the Fisheye wide angle dome I had full coverage of the frame with one or two flashes and would be hard pressed to recommend larger strobes as the DS-51 sized strobe is quite adequate to cover most any scene.

Once assembled the system was slightly negative in both



Diver Silhouette, Devil's Ear Spring, Tannic water color from Santa Fe River, Florida, Olympus TG6, Ikelite housing, Two Ikelite DS-51 Flashes, 10.35mm full frame, ISO-100, F/14, 1/60th sec
Snorkler at Ginnie Springs, Florida, Olympus TG6, Ikelite housing, Two Ikelite DS-51 Flashes, 4.5mm Circular Fisheye end of lens, ISO-100, F/8, 1/30th sec

fresh water and salt water allowing excellent balance for single handed operation. In the water the auto focus worked very well for both wide angle and fisheye shots.

If you are diving in dark turbid water, low light or night diving a focus light is required to maximize auto focus.

I was very impressed with the closeup/macro feature of the Olympus lens converter which allows you to cover a wide range of subjects from small to midsize fish. The wide and fisheye ends of the lens allow you to cover most wide scenes and diver photos. CFWA and larger scenes like wrecks or reefs would also be easily covered.

The fisheye lens and port are also useful for shooting split shots in fairly calm water.





#PHILRUDINPHOTOGRAPHY

Split image near the Santa Fe River, Florida, Olympus TG6, Ikelite housing, Two Ikelite DS-51 Flashes, 4.5mm Circular Fisheye end of lens, ISO-200, F/8, 1/200th sec

The DS-51 flash's in manual mode at around half power or less was adequate to properly expose most subjects. Keep in mind that consumer compacts have small sensors and as a result greater depth of field even at wider f/stops.

Image quality from the TG-6 is excellent for a camera at this price point and size. My images have excellent color and sharpness, I was also impressed at the amount of detail that could be recovered from under exposed captures.

If you are just getting started with underwater photography or looking for a backup camera, teaching tool or an all weather camera the Olympus TG-6 and Ikelite housing are a great place to start.



Thanks again to the outstanding Ikelite team for their assistance and support with the underwater equipment used for this review.

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