

Let's Get Weird

by The Backscatter Team

When it comes to underwater photography lenses, the best performance and most reliable results are going to come from either the ultra-wide fisheye or high-magnification macro ends of the lens spectrum.

These have long been the go-to lenses for creating classic underwater photos and with good reason. Large subjects and scenes demand a wide field of view, allowing the photographer to get close and produce better color, contrast, and clarity. Tiny macro critters need a powerful macro lens in order to appear larger than life and fill the frame. There's nothing wrong with either of these time-tested photo styles, but every now and then you may find yourself wanting to break away from the ordinary. When that creative vibe starts flowing it's time to toss convention overboard and start getting weird!

Every lens featured in this guide provides a unique and creative effect that you won't be able to replicate with more traditional lenses. Some of these lenses mount directly on the camera, whereas others are external accessory lenses designed to work with either the built-in lens of a compact camera or an interchangeable lens on mirrorless or SLR systems.

There is merit to the discussion of whether or not these lenses are 'gimmicky'. There is also a certain satisfaction that comes from capturing an image in-camera that otherwise looks like it would only be possible through Photoshop manipulation. They do provide a fun and creative outlet for experimenting with new techniques, style, and ways of capturing otherwise "boring" subjects.



Using weird underwater lenses can change the look of the ordinary to eye-catching. There are many ways to shoot the same subject.

Left: Olympus TG-5 | No Accessory Lens | 1/100 | ISO 200 | f14 – Center: Olympus TG-5 | Saga Magic Ball | 1/100 | ISO 200 | f14 – Right: Olympus TG-5 | Inon ZM80 Lens | 1/80 | ISO 100 | f6.3

Laowa 24mm Probe Lens

“Whoa! What is that thing?!?” is the most common question you’ll get when people see the Laowa Venus 24mm f14 Macro Probe Lens on my underwater camera rig. The best way to describe it is a super macro lens with a wide field of view. It has a minimum working distance of less than an inch with a 24mm lens field of view. At minimum focus, the reproduction ratio is twice life-size at 2:1, which is equivalent to using an SLR macro lens with a +10 to +12 diopter. This lens is all about serious macro capability, but with a much wider field of view. Commonly referred to as a “bug-eye” effect, it can lead to some very interesting shots.

Sony a7R III | Laowa Probe Lens | 1/40 | ISO 3200



Saga Magic Ball



Nikon D850 | Nikon 60mm Lens | SAGA Magic Ball | 1/100 | ISO 1600 | f22

A kaleidoscope, drop of water, and a lens walk into a bar...

The result is something that will open new doors for your underwater photography. The SAGA Magic Ball is possibly the most fun lens you will ever use. It produces a circular fisheye image in the center and a water drop effect on the edges. It might be a one trick pony for underwater photography contests, but it makes images that will capture the eye and it's a heck of a lot of fun!

Saga Magic Tube

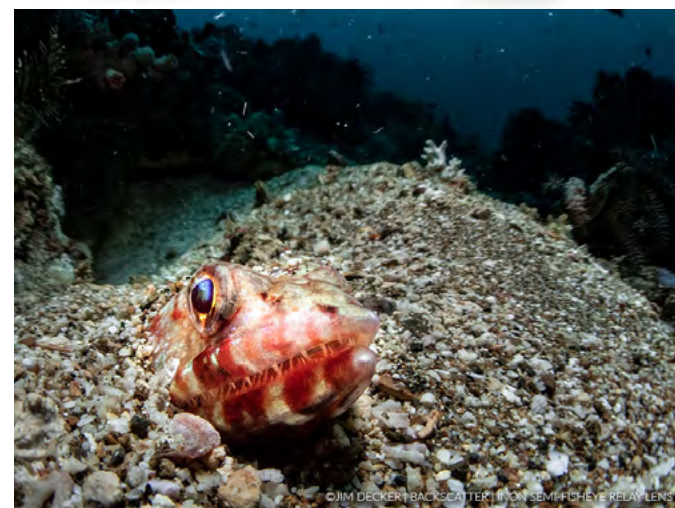


Nikon D850 | Nikon 60mm Lens | SAGA Magic Ball | 1/200 | ISO 400 | f22

Reflective tube for swirling the subject

A pretty simple concept, the Saga Magic Tube threads onto 67mm macro ports and uses a tube lined with reflective material to create a swirl of colors around the center of the frame. The swirly tie-dye effect is an excellent trick for commonly photographed subjects. It works with virtually any macro lens and compact camera zoom lenses, but is not compatible with additional diopters.

Inon ZM80 Micro Fisheye Lens



Olympus TG-5 | Inon ZM80 Lens | 1/40 | ISO 100 | f11

Inon's compact Inon ZM80 creates a fisheye effect in a very small package. This allows shooters to get a 150-degree wide angle perspective at extremely close range. Because of its tiny size, the lens can be positioned in places a normal fisheye with a dome can't get. With the correct adapter, the Inon ZM80 can mount on 67mm or 52mm threaded ports and be adjusted to achieve the correct distance from the camera lens.

Canon & Nikon 8-15mm Fisheye Lens



These lenses are not necessarily weird in and of themselves, as they are actually two of Backscatter's most recommended and used lenses for full frame wide angle photography. What sets these two apart from other fisheye lenses is their zoom ability and the option to



*Sony a7S | Canon 8-15mm Lens | 1/125
| ISO 400 | f14*

shoot a full circular 180-degree image.

What this effectively means underwater is that you can seamlessly transition from frame-filling corner-to-corner shots at the 15mm end of the lens to an ultra-wide, heavily vignetted, stylish circular shot at the 8mm end. This effect can easily be over-done, so take it in stride, but when you need some fresh content for your square 1:1-ratio based Instagram feed, this is our favorite tool for the job.

Conclusion

Capturing fun, creative, and outside-the-box images is easier

than ever with this array of unique lenses and optics. While some of these imaging styles might not be for everyone or every dive, they certainly are a great way to break free from the regular routine and produce some stylish shots that are sure to elicit a reaction from your audience. When you are ready to start getting weird, pick up one of these clever optics and get to work! As always, don't hesitate to reach out to the team at Backscatter for compatibility consultation and recommendations for your rig. Let's get weird!

The Backscatter Team
www.backscatter.com

