

Seafrogs Button Control Housing For iPhone 11/11 Pro Max

by Peter Rowlands

Following on from my Smartphone housing review in UwP112 Jan/Feb 2020, avid readers will no doubt remember how I was ideally looking for a housing which would give me control over what I feel is a revolutionary capability - Panos or panoramas.

Until recently nearly all housings controlled the Smartphone via Bluetooth which allowed stills and video shooting but presumably Apple, in particular, will not release the code to control the Pano function.

I was delighted to find that after an extensive internet search such a housing now exists which allows access to all the iPhone camera functions, including Panos, using mechanical buttons rather than Bluetooth.

Since my current iPhone is the 11 Pro Max, it was the Seafrogs Button Control Housing For iPhone 11/11 Pro Max which caught my attention and released my credit card details. Prices today are fluctuating like one way hot air balloons so you need to contact them for the latest cost but I was lucky enough to pay less than

£100 which included a rudimentary vacuum system.

It was an excited me that signed for the package less than ten days later and first impressions were extremely favourable in terms of size and construction quality.

The SeaFrogs housing is sturdy and positive in the hand and ergonomically surprisingly good in that the buttons are direct so it feels just like using an iPhone on land only chunkier.

The iPhone needs no preparation to install save removing any outer protection case which you might already use. The only thing you have to do is set the iPhone to be in the Camera app.

The On/Off button does just that but once off and then pushed on again you are taken to the opening page which fortunately has a Camera icon bottom right (with the iPhone held vertically). Push and hold down the bigger button and you will be taken to the Camera mode. Please note that this is a rotating control and it needs to be positioned correctly to push down onto the Camera icon.



Once installed with the back door closed I quickly turned the iPhone on and tried to scroll through the camera functions to access the Pano setting. This was where I discovered a slight fly in the ointment in that I was unable to scroll fully left or right through all of the camera functions. The reason for this I eventually discovered was the size of the text on the iPhone in general.

The solution is simple but necessary. In the Settings Menu go down to Display & Brightness and then down to Text Size. There, as the name implies, you can adjust the size of the text. By default it is in the centre and by adjusting the size down at least 'two notches' smaller (to the left) all of the functions were accessible. Deep joy.



As previously mentioned, the housing comes with a rudimentary vacuum valve but be aware that the pump is an optional extra. This basic valve is little more than a one way flap which, when the pump is activated, lifts the flap and pulls air out of the housing. The flap then reseats and maintains the inner pressure.

The downside to this basic valve is that there is no visual confirmation that the pressure is holding but, in practice, all you need is to try and open the housing by rotating the closure knob and you will feel a resistance and not be able to rotate the control fully. This confirms that the pressure is intact.

Underwater the housing is very 'exciting' to use as it feels just like you use the camera on land and having access to all the Camera functions is most empowering.

Naturally I went straight to Pano, chose a suitable subject and pressed the Shoot button and panned right. As I did this there was a small preview screen which showed how the shot was turning out - live - there and then before my very eyes. Truly amazing.

As if this were not enough, it is possible to look at your last image shot on the full 6.5" screen. The only slight downside is that you have to turn the iPhone off and on again to get back into the camera menu but then life's a bitch.

The big difference with the iPhone Pano mode (and I don't know if this is true for other Smartphones) is that the camera is scanning in vertical slices as you pan and joining up the slices in real time. This brings several advantages over the traditional method of taking overlapping still frames and then stitching them later in Lightroom or other apps which are available.

My inaugural dive was with quality underwater



Top: My iPhone Pano shot as it came out of 'the camera'.

Bottom. Dan's stitched shot from 6 vertically shot frames. He said "Lightroom struggled where there was too much movement in the model and refused to stitch all the frames so I used Microsoft's ICE (Image Composite Editor) to do the others, which had mixed results with quite a few errors in the image".

Olympus OMD E-M1, Aquatica housing, Olympus 14-42mm lens (at 14mm) with the Nauticam WWL-1