

M. Zuiko 8-25mm

By Andrew McLachlan

When I began my journey into the world of underwater photography with the micro four thirds format (MFT) using the Olympus / OM System OM1 cameras I immediately purchased the M.Zuiko ED 8mm f/1.8 Fisheye PRO, M.Zuiko ED 7-14mm f/2.8 PRO, and the M.Zuiko ED 60mm f/2.8 Macro lenses as these were the most often discussed options for MFT underwater photography.

These lenses have been my workhorse lenses for quite some time now and have served me well in capturing some very nice imagery beneath the waves. I also own the M.Zuiko ED 8-25mm f/4 PRO lens, which I have mostly reserved for my topside landscape photography.

The M. Zuiko 8-25mm lens has quickly become my go-to lens for many of my excursions into Grand Cayman's underwater world. I do not intend to provide a pixel peeper's review, but rather my real-world experience from diving with this lens to produce salable imagery for my agent and personal licensing requirements.

Before we go to depth, we must decide on what lens to use beneath the waves. Often, we must commit to

either wide angle reef scenes, close focus wide angle, or macro subjects and without a doubt we will find a subject that we wish a different decision was made prior to the dive.

There are some very expensive conversion lenses that perform exceedingly well as they allow photographers to take advantage of a range of focal lengths underwater, greatly improving the versatility of some lenses. However, the M. Zuiko ED 8-25mm f/4 PRO provides Micro Four Thirds (MFT) shooters with excellent versatility at a fraction of the cost. In fact, if you are already set-up to use the M. Zuiko ED 7-14mm f/2.8 PRO lens in your housing it may be as easy as purchasing a zoom gear for the M.Zuiko f/4 8-25mm PRO lens.

I have been using the AOI UH-OM1 housing with the M. Zuiko ED 7-14mm f/2.8 PRO lens for almost 2 years now. Being able to use the M.Zuiko 8-25mm f/4 PRO lens in my set-up was as easy as getting the appropriate zoom gear (AOI LG-OM2-825PRO) as I already use the 37mm Zoom Knob Extension ring (AOI ER-PN-OD-37) and the 8" dome port (AOI DLP-12 OD).

Due to the polycarbonate





Great Barracuda photographed with the OM1 and M. Zuiko ED 8-25mm f/4 PRO lens in an AOI UH-OM1 housing with AOI DLP-12 OD Dome Port and dual AOI Q1-RC Strokes. ISO 200, f8 @ 1/200 sec at 25mm (50mm FF)



Wreck of the Geneva Kathleen photographed with the OM1 and M. Zuiko ED 8-25mm f/4 PRO lens in an AOI UH-OM1 housing with AOI DLP-12 OD Dome Port and dual AOI Q1-RC Strokes. ISO 200, f8 @ 1/250 sec at 8mm (16mm FF)

construction of my gear this set-up is quite positively buoyant. I corrected this by using a 2lb ankle weight around the back of the dome port.

The M. Zuiko 8-25mm f/4.0 PRO lens offers a focal range of 16-50mm in full frame terms and is an excellent choice for underwater photographers using the Micro Four Thirds (MFT) system, offering several features that will cater to the unique demands of shooting in aquatic environments. The 8mm focal length (16mm full-

frame equivalent) is particularly advantageous underwater, allowing you to capture wide scenes such as coral reefs, large schools of fish, sea turtles, rays, and wrecks. The close focusing capabilities of the lens (9 inches from subject to sensor) make it great for close focus wide angle (CFWA). This minimum focus distance also makes it a powerful tool when the lens is zoomed to 25mm (50mm full frame equivalent) for closer subjects like individual reef fish, quasi macro



Hawksbill Turtle. OM1 and M. Zuiko ED 8-25mm f/4 PRO lens in an AOI UH-OM1 housing with AOI DLP-12 OD Dome Port and 2x AOI Q1-RC Strobes. ISO 400, f8 @ 1/160 sec at 8mm (16mm FF)



USS Kittiwake. OM1 and M. Zuiko ED 8-25mm f/4 PRO lens in an AOI UH-OM1 housing with AOI DLP-12 OD Dome Port with ambient light. ISO 500, f8 @ 1/200 sec at 8mm (16mm FF)

scenarios, and more detailed shots of the underwater environment. For my shooting style this lens offers superb flexibility for the subjects I most typically encounter on a dive in Grand Cayman. I can go wide and close for sponge-scapes and co-operative reef fish and zoom the lens to 25mm

to keep a bit of distance for skittish subjects or smaller reef fish of around 6 inches or so and still fill the frame nicely.

But it is an f/4 lens? While f/4 is not particularly fast, it is consistent throughout the zoom range. This means you need not worry about

exposure changes when zooming the lens, which can be particularly helpful in unpredictable lighting conditions. I seldom shoot with a lens wide open as I am often getting in quite close and stopping the lens down will yield better depth field for the subject matter in the image. For example,

shooting an f/2.8 lens at f/8 is the same as shooting an f/4 lens at f/8 is the same. In fact, I think the only time I have ever shot an f/2.8 lens wide open is when I have been topside photographing the night sky.

The M. Zuiko 8-25mm lens delivers excellent sharpness and



Tiger Grouper photographed with the OM1 and M. Zuiko ED 8-25mm f/4 PRO lens in an AOI UH-OM1 housing with AOI DLP-12 OD Dome Port and dual AOI Q1-RC Strobes. ISO 400, f8 @ 1/250 sec at 25mm (50mm FF)



Small Sand Diver of roughly 6 inches photographed with the OM1 and M. Zuiko ED 8-25mm f/4 PRO lens in an AOI UH-OM1 housing with AOI DLP-12 OD Dome Port and dual AOI Q1-RC Strobes



Tubulate Sponge and Red Rope Sponge photographed with the OM1 and M. Zuiko ED 8-25mm f/4 PRO lens in an AOI UH-OM1 housing with AOI DLP-12 OD Dome Port and dual AOI Q1-RC Strobes. ISO 400, f8 @ 1/50 sec at 8mm (16mm FF)

low distortion, even at the widest angles, which is crucial for capturing clarity and detail. The advanced optical elements in the lens minimize chromatic aberrations which is typically more pronounced underwater due to refraction. As mentioned previously the minimum focusing distance of 9 inches allows you to get close to your subjects, which is beneficial when shooting smaller marine life or coral details. This versatility of close focusing

capability is very valuable for improved clarity and sharpness. You may recall the saying “if you think you are close enough, get closer” then the M. Zuiko ED 8-25mm f/4 PRO lens will allow you to do just that.

The lens is compatible with various underwater housings available for Olympus cameras. The compact size of the lens means that it can fit well within many standard dome ports, providing the necessary optical quality required for underwater



This is the textured plastic around the front element of the lens that will cause reflection concerns when the lens is held towards the sun at such an angle that will cause reflections. I would highly advise using an anti-reflection ring with this lens by either making your own with some flat black material or sourcing out options to purchase.

shooting. Dome ports are typically preferred when using wide-angle lenses like this one because they help maintain the field of view underwater and minimize distortion. The M. Zuiko ED 8-25mm f/4 PRO lens is also an excellent choice for split images (over-under) when used in large 8" dome ports.

If you choose to shoot this lens with ambient light it is important to note that it accepts 72mm filters, unlike the M. Zuiko ED 7-14mm f/2.8 PRO lens that does not accept filters due to the bulbous front element. Being able to accept the screw on filters means that a Magic Filter can easily be used with this lens for improved colour rendition beneath the waves. Yes, the OM System OM1 features an underwater white balance setting but this is really only useful close to the surface. I highly advise

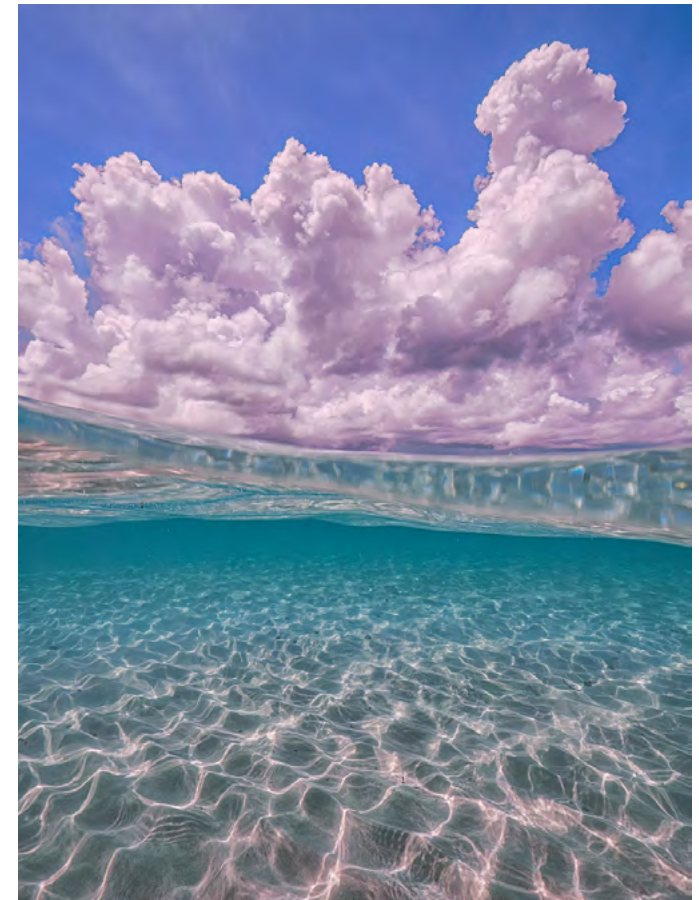


I connect 2 X 1lb ankle weights together and place them just behind the dome port to give better balance.

Over-under scene from Seven Mile Beach photographed with the OM1 and M. Zuiko ED 8-25mm f/4 PRO lens in an AOI UH-OM1 housing with AOI DLP-12 OD Dome Port with ambient light. ISO 200, f16 @ 1/500 sec at 8mm (16mm FF)

setting a custom white balance when going to depth with ambient light photography. I am often shooting with strobes at depth and currently use a pair of AOI Q1-RC Strobes. I enjoy their compact size and ease of use, and when fitted with the optional dome diffusers I find they spread the light sufficiently for my photographic needs.

No lens is really designed without some sort of drawback, and I have found one such drawback with the M. Zuiko 8-25mm f/4 PRO lens. When using the lens in my 8" dome I became aware of a reflection issue on a shoot at the USS Kittiwake



while shooting into the sun. This can be a problem with many brands of lenses inside large domes. I noticed the issue on the dive and was able to remedy the situation by tilting the camera slightly downward to prevent the reflection from being visible in the images. The lens has some textured plastic around the front glass element that will reflect in the images when the lens is positioned at an angle that will cause reflections. I would highly advise using an anti-reflection ring with this lens by either making your own with some flat black material or sourcing out options to purchase.



Hawksbill Turtle photographed with the OM1 and M. Zuiko ED 8-25mm f/4 PRO lens in an AOI UH-OM1 housing with AOI DLP-12 OD Dome Port and dual AOI Q1-RC Strobes

The M. Zuiko 8-25mm f/4.0 PRO lens is highly versatile for underwater photography, particularly if you need a lens that can handle both wide-angle, split scenes, and quasi-macro on a single dive. Having one lens that can accomplish each of those photography scenarios is incredible. The optical quality, close focusing ability, and compatibility with underwater housings make it a strong candidate for capturing stunning underwater images, whether you're

shooting wide reef scenes or more intimate marine life portraits.

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