

Fuji Finepix F710 and WP-FX701 housing

The FinePix F710 Zoom enters Fujifilm's range as a partner to the FinePix F700 Zoom but now has a 4x zoom lens, widescreen LCD display and a pop-up flash.

In recognition of the growing popularity of the widescreen format used in a range of consumer electronics products, the FinePix F710 Zoom incorporates a new 2.1" widescreen LCD for image capture and playback of 16:9 format images - a picture size adjusted for optimised playback on widescreen televisions.

The 16:9 format on the F710 is similar to many video cameras and is not true 16:9. It achieves the format by chopping the top and bottom of the 4:3 frame and elongating it. On video cameras this results in a loss of quality but the F710 achieves this with virtually no loss. In truth it would be possible to achieve the same effect by cropping your conventional format images but you would have to do this frame by frame which would be very tedious so the F710 is a very welcome arrival.

The FinePix F710 Zoom uses 3.1 million S-pixels and 3.1 million R-pixels to produce an ultra-smooth output image of 6.2 million recorded pixels and the quality of the pictures

confirms this.

At just 109.5 (W) X 54 (H) x 29 (D) mm and weighing 210g (excluding batteries and media) the F710 is very pocketable and when turned on is ready to take shots in about a second which is very impressive.

Downloading pictures to a computer is via a USB2.0 port on the camera or via a very useful dock which incorporates USB2.0 and recharging facilities. The F710 has a proprietary NP-40 710mAh battery which should be enough for 135 exposures with the LCD screen on.

Pictures are captured on miniscule xD-Picture Card™ cards which I understand can now go up to 512mb.

It is very difficult to review the new breed of polycarbonate underwater housings without waxing lyrical. The quality of design and construction is awesome and, for what you are getting, the price is miniscule. All of the camera's controls can be accessed by either push button, rotary or flip switches, all of which fall easily to hand.

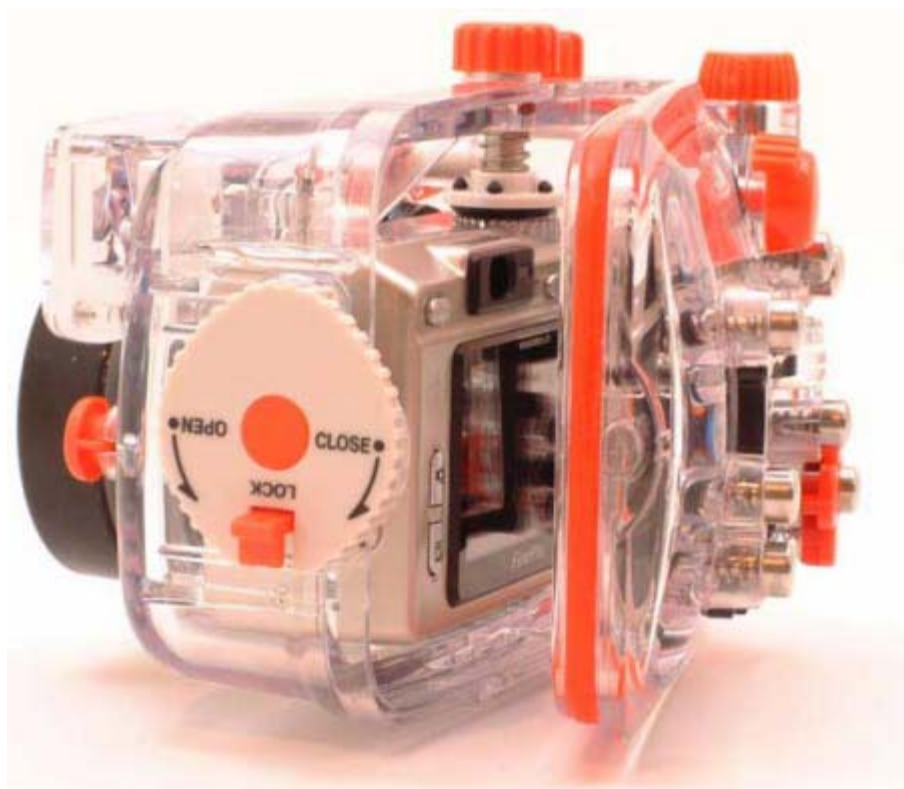
The main seal is a piston design and the locking catch is rotary with a manual locking lever.



The built-in flash can be activated from the housing but there is now way of turning it off once it is opened either physically or from within the menu. Having been used to

a camera and housing combo which allows me to do this I would find this an irritation but I suppose I could always cover the flash with your hand if needs be.

The glass front lens port is



retained by a plastic ring which does not have any filter threads which is a big limitation if you want to add wide angle and close up supplementary lenses. Inon make adaptors for other housings to allow extra lenses to be fitted but they do not make them for Fuji housings at the time of writing.

Overall the F710 and its 40 metre housing are a good combination offering 16:9 output and ease of use but it would have been nice to an automatic locking lever which most other housings have, the ability to turn

off the flash and a threaded front lens ring so that additional lenses could be fitted. Having said that, the F710 combo is certainly one you should consider if you want a versatile point and shoot system but if you want to expand your underwater photographic capabilities there are other housings on the market which would be more suitable.

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