

Panasonic DMC-TZ1 and DMW-MCTZ1

by Peter Rowlands



Panasonic are a relative newcomer in the underwater compact world but they have made an impressive start with the DMC-TZ1 and 40 metre DMW-MCTZ1 underwater housing.

The camera is a 5 megapixel point and shoot and boasts a 10x optical zoom (35-350mm 35mm equivalent). This is very impressive on land but a bit extreme underwater! A nice feature as far as I'm concerned is that the camera can provide 16:9 format by cropping top and bottom of the frame. Sure you can do this with software later but it would be tedious applying to all your shots when the camera can do it for you.

From an underwater photographers viewpoint the TZ1 is www.uwpmag.com

an interesting camera and has three important features. Manual white balance, optical image stabilisation and a Scene mode for underwater. The white balance is useful when using colour correcting filters, the stabilisation helps shutter blur and the scene mode is a very useful setting for general use including (as I found) the built in flash.

Speaking of the built-in flash the TZ1's is tiny yet still packs some power even when diffused by the housing. I found it effective to at least a metre underwater and was amazed by its ability to focus and fire in very low light conditions.

There are comprehensive camera reviews at www.dpreview.com so follow their link to find out more. The



The 'Underwater' setting in the Scene mode produces very good results down to about 10 metres

The built in flash is surprisingly effective and the autofocus is excellent in low light conditions.





housing is very well designed and constructed and all of the controls fall easily to hand. No setting up is required to install the camera, you just slot it in, check the piston design O ring seal and close the back which automatically engages the locking mechanism.

The large 2.5" LCD screen is a joy to view and is slightly shielded by an inner rubber surround. In practice this works well but a larger, external hood would be belt and braces.

The one downside of the housing, and this is true of most housings except some Olympus ones, is that the description of each control is moulded in the clear polycarbonate housing which can be difficult to read in certain light. This could well be more of a problem for me as I use/test a variety of cameras/housings and each varies. If, like most sensible people, you have just one camera you will very soon get used to the controls.

For some reason Panasonic have designed an odd shaped front port which will make fitting external wide angle lenses problematic if not impossible but if all you want is a good point and shoot camera with a very effective underwater scene setting you should give the TZ1 serious consideration.

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