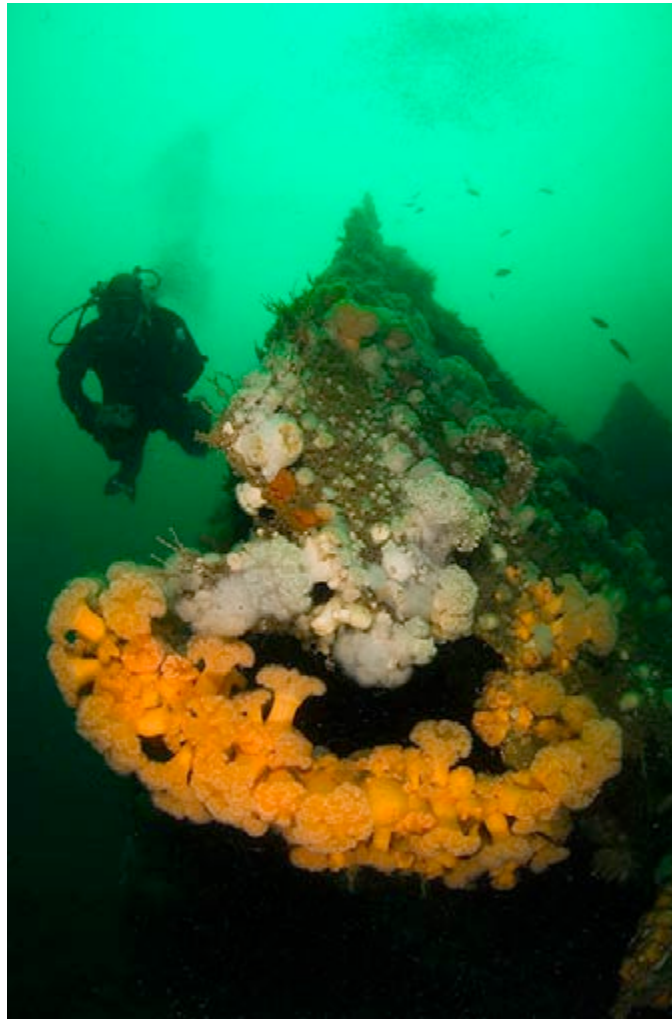




used underwater. In the early 1980s the Pentax LX was one of the more popular underwater cameras, made all the more so by the Pentax 17-28mm fisheye zoom. We must also thank Pentax for the Tokina 10-17mm as the optics of this lens first appeared in 2005 as a Pentax branded lens for their range of digital SLRs. Since then we have all be waiting with baited breath for Tokina to release it in other mounts, particularly Nikon and Canon that



dominate the underwater DSLR world. The Tokina 10-17mm Fisheye zoom is designed specifically for APS-C or DX sized sensor digital SLR cameras. It will not project a frame-filling image at its wider focal lengths on a film cameras or full-frame digital cameras.

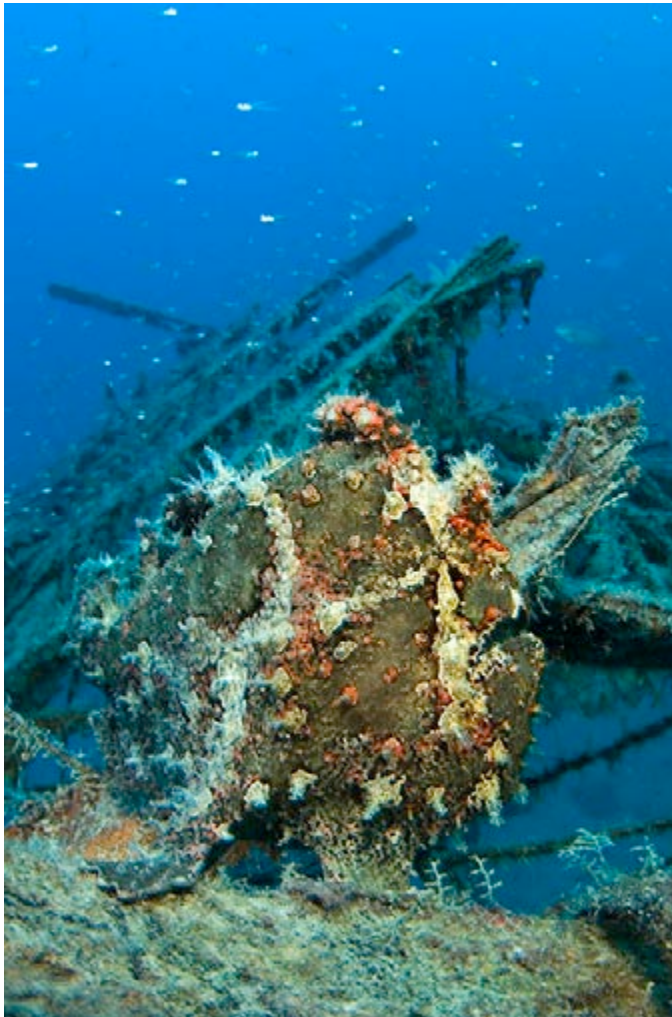
The Tokina 10-17mm has received mixed reviews for land photography. Most fail to see a reason for its existence and then comment on the



*(Far left) The Tokina works well for standard subject and model shots, although most of these photos are taken at 10mm and therefore the zoom offers no advantage over a fisheye prime lens. Giant clam and diver, Sipadan, Malaysia. Nikon D2X + Subal housing. Tokina 10-17mm @ 10mm. F9 @ 1/80th. 2 x Subtronic Alpha Pro strobes.*

*(Centre) Some users have reported that this lens can struggle to autofocus. I have not found this problem either in the tropics or in the darker conditions in the UK without a focus light. Nikon D2X + Subal housing. The svelte UWP editor on the wreck of the James Eagan Layne, UK. Tokina 10-17mm @ 10mm. F13 @ 1/13th. 2 x Subtronic Alpha Pro strobes.*

*(Above) I have found that the lens resists flare similarly well to other fisheyes, capturing good details in highlights within the limitations of digital camera sensors. Turtle and batfish, Sipadan, Malaysia. Nikon D2X + Subal housing. Tokina 10-17mm @ 17mm. F9 @ 1/50th. No flash.*



fringing. I struggle to think of any compelling reasons to have this lens on land, but by the same token I cannot think of a more useful focal range for wide angle photography underwater. In fact this lens could have been designed specifically for us. If you are someone who has to justify a lens purchase for a dual role both above and below the waves then the Tokina might be tough. For the rest of us it is an answer to many prayers.



Underwater this lens is particularly suitable to action packed diving: encounters with big animals and schools. I am sure that you have all made dives where you would like to put on a fisheye for high impact images, but are concerned that the subjects will not come close enough to fill the frame. Worry no longer. It is also a great lens for photojournalists, who want to photograph whatever they encounter to tell the story of their diving. For close-focus wide



*(Far left) The Tokina has particularly short minimum focus, making it possible to take frame filling portraits of approachable subjects. Frogfish, Kapalai, Malaysia. Nikon D2X + Subal housing. Tokina 10-17mm @ 17mm. F10 @ 1/8th. 2 x Subtronic Alpha Pro strobes.*

*(Centre) When zoomed in to 17mm the Tokina hides much of its fisheye barrel distortion as you can see in the jetty at the top of this frame. Starfish and jetty, Kapalai, Malaysia. Nikon D2X + Subal housing. Tokina 10-17mm @ 17mm. F13 @ 1/80th. Magic Filter.*

*(Above) The Tokina is an excellent wreck lens. At 10mm it captures vistas and zoomed in, hiding some of the barrel distortion it is well suited to capturing interior details. Tiles in the Chrisoula K, Egypt. Nikon D2X + Subal housing. Tokina 10-17mm @ 14mm. F7.1 @ 1/80th. 2 x Subtronic Alpha Pro strobes.*

angle, I feel that it does not offer much advantage over a prime fisheye as most shots tend to be taken at the 10mm end anyway. The lens is very suited to shipwreck photography: at 10mm providing the coverage for large wreck vistas while at 17mm being suited to wreck details and interiors. As the lens is zoomed towards the 17mm end much of its fisheye distortion disappears, helpful for the straight lines of wreck innards.



*The flexibility of the Tokina makes it ideal for underwater photo-journalist keen on recording various and unpredictable encounters that tell the story of a dive. Diver swimming through a school of snappers, Egypt. Nikon D2X + Subal housing. Tokina 10-17mm @ 14mm. F7.1 @ 1/100th. 2 x Subtronic Alpha Pro strobes*

One of the strengths of the Tokina is that it has exceptional close focus, meaning that it is capable of surprisingly high magnification portraits, as long as the subject will let you approach closely. That said all these different types of shots (e.g. close-focus wide angle, big animals, wrecks and portraits) require quite different strobe positioning for optimum lighting. And on any dive it does become a hassle and a distraction to constantly be switching between

them. I found I would concentrate on one type of shot for most dives, only switching if something exceptional was encountered. Although it was fabulous to have the option.

I should also stress that this lens is really wide. Even zoomed in. At its widest the coverage is close to 180° corner to corner, and zoomed to 17mm it is still about 100°. Zoomed in to 17mm it is about equivalent to the widest end of a rectilinear 12-24mm zoom, making these two lenses a



*The Tokina lens does not have a rear filter mount, although gel filters can easily be attached to the rear of the lens and work well over these focal lengths. Turtle and reef, Sipadan, Malaysia. Nikon D2X + Subal housing. Tokina 10-17mm @ 15mm. F7.1 @ 1/60th. Magic Filter.*

perfect travelling combination.

For me, this review comes down to one big question. Any underwater photographer will appreciate that the focal range is very useful, but how does the image quality compare with a prime fisheye. Testing the lens on land I found that the zoom was more prone to chromatic aberrations and particularly purple fringing on high contrast details in the corners of the frame. Sharpness was similar. Underwater, behind a dome port,

the fringing issue is much less. At typical apertures (not wide open) under normal shooting conditions I have found the Tokina photos to be all but indistinguishable from my Nikon 10.5mm for sharpness, colour saturation and fringing. That said, pool tests published by Steve Frink and Mike Mesgleski on Wetpixel.com have shown more fringing from the Tokina, although they note that pool test shots are not truly representative of how fisheyes are used in the ocean.