

Panasonic Lumix DMC-TZ3 Review

by Karin Brussaard

The Panasonic Lumix TZ3 with 7.2 million pixels is such a camera. This camera is also called a Traveler Zoom camera. The Lumix TZ3 features 10x optical zoom and offers a 28mm wide angle. Often cameras with large zoom ranges such as the one on the Lumix TZ3 are also of a large size but Panasonic succeeded in keeping the camera quite small. Therefore it is a perfect camera for underwater shooting. And the good thing about the 28mm wide angle is that you don't have to carry along a wide angle lens in your usually already overweight luggage.

The underwater housing, the DMW-MCTZ3 has been made of polycarbonate and is waterproof until a depth of 40 meters. Nearly all the functions can be operated underwater. The camera slides into the underwater housing with ease and opening the housing is also effortless. Even when there is pressure on the housing you don't have to force anything. The underwater housing is identical to that of the DMC-TZ2, which makes swapping from the TZ2 to the TZ3 very easy. And as mentioned before, the camera offers a 28-280 zoom range.

Unfortunately the camera's lens

is not that bright (f/3.3-f/4.9) but that does not diminish the quality of the lens. It is a Leica DC Vario Elmar lens delivering needle-sharp pictures. The camera features a 3-inch LCD monitor on the back offering 230,000 pixels of resolution. An additional function is the so-called High-Angle mode. This mode enables checking your composition on the monitor from an extreme angle. And that will come in extremely handy when you are trying to capture that one stubborn shrimp that just won't stay on the spot you had in mind for him.

An additional nice function on the camera is the image stabilization system. It enables shooting with slow shutter speeds. You do have to activate this function beforehand, which I find a pity because once the camera is inside the underwater housing the function is not accessible anymore. The camera has a limited amount of setting possibilities, such as setting shutter time and aperture. Therefore it might be less suitable for the demanding photographer requiring more advanced settings. For those who like convenience this camera is ideal. There is a considerable amount of scene modes available to choose from.



Every picture I made during testing was taken in "Simple Mode". And I find it striking how well

exposed the pictures come out in this mode. A diffuser is delivered with the underwater housing to spread the light



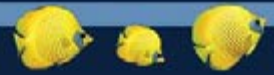
of the flash. This makes the dirt in the water less visible on pictures; a great advantage. One disadvantage however is the fact that the left bottom of the pictures is not exposed well when only using the internal flash.

The camera is delivered including a Lithium-Ion battery. Unfortunately this battery got empty after one hour of diving thus requiring a recharge before every next dive. It means that when you go for more than one dive during a day, you have to remove the camera from the underwater housing in between scuba diving. On a boat trip this is not the nicest of jobs and mistakes can be made easily.

All in all I am very pleased with the Panasonic Lumix DMC-TZ3 and the DMW-MCTZ3 underwater housing. Biggest plus of this camera

is the large zoom range of 28-280mm that makes the camera perfect for using underwater as well as on land. The weekend that I was testing the camera a young seal appeared on the dike unexpectedly. It only took seconds to take the camera out of the housing and thanks to the extreme zoom function and image stabilization I was able to capture this beautiful creature. The camera takes needle-sharp pictures underwater as well as on land and it is an easy to operate camera. One disadvantage I came across is the battery's lack of stamina. Taking a second battery with you might be a solution.

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