

SeaLife DC1200

By Peter Rowlands

I think it's fair to say that SeaLife have, in the past, produced cameras to a price to cater for the entry level photographer and as such they have introduced thousands of divers to a new hobby. For most of them their first camera will be all they need but for a significant number their photographic requirements will expand as they get keener and they will move on.

With the SeaLife DC1200 however you have an inexpensive basic camera which has some system accessories including external strobe and wide angle lens which can be added later to make it much more versatile and as such it could be all the camera you ever need.

In terms of specification the DC1200 is a 12 megapixel stills and 640x480 video camera. It has a 34-170mm lens (in 35mm terms) which can focus, in wide macro mode, from 4 inches to infinity and, in tele macro mode, from 2 feet to infinity. It takes SD and SDHC memory cards up to 16gig and comes with a long life rechargeable battery.

It is a point and shoot camera with several scene options so it is very simple to use yet it has more

white balance settings than any other camera I know. In addition to the usual Auto and Manual white balance settings there are presets for both blue and green water for both less than 25 feet and below 25 feet. This is a real first for any underwater camera.

But there's more. There are even 2 settings for allowing double exposures. The first is picture on picture (whole frame each time) or left frame and then right frame. This is a very effective technique to create images with a new and imaginative perspective. And then there's the 'Spy' mode which allows timelapse shots a frame every 10 secs, or 30 secs, or 1, 5, 30 or 60 minutes.

The SeaLife DC1200 is basically a land camera in an underwater housing so it can be taken out and used on land in the usual way. SeaLife have obviously had the camera specifically made for them as, in addition to the large range of white balance settings, it also has some operating capabilities unlike other cameras which only become apparent once it is in the housing.

At first glance the housing has fewer controls than the camera so I was immediately suspicious that



some of the functions would not be available underwater but the camera has some dual function capabilities which make it work perfectly well with just 5 lovely paddle lever style controls. On the camera there is the usual dial with 'up/down/left/right' buttons but the housing only controls the 'down' and 'right' action however, depending on the mode you are in, the zoom lever controls either up and down or left and right. Very clever indeed. The result is, as far as I can ascertain, that you can control all of the camera functions underwater with the exception of exposure

compensation.

The UK price of £399.99 includes a 2gig card from Cameras Underwater and there is a Elite package price of £749.99 which includes the DC1200 camera, SL961 strobe set, flash link, wide angle lens and lens dock + soft, lightweight travel case.

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