

Nauticam WWL-1 vs INON UWL-H100 with dome unit II

by Jussi Hokkanen

It seems Nauticam is planning to take over the whole underwater photography business by releasing new products with increasing speed and not only products they are familiar with but also in completely new areas like optics. The latest Nauticam product to hit the shelves just before Christmas was the Nauticam WWL-1 wide angle lens. This beast of a lens promises to beat all the others currently on the market and also comes with a new optional bayonet system on top of the traditional M67 thread. With this Bayonet system you can turn all M67 Nauticam flat ports to bayonets. With the lens Nauticam also releases a separate port adapter which will also work with many other housings. Soon to be available are bayonet adapters for the Nauticam Macro lenses so you can forget about screwing on lenses underwater.

The WWL-1 is not really a travel friendly lens; it weighs 1.3 kg and comes with its own semi-rigid carry case. Even underwater it still weighs 600 grams so now those Nauticam buoyancy arms you bought will come really handy.

As with all Nauticam products, it really looks the business and the company promises it is sharper and more flexible in use than any previous wet-lens. They also promise that the lens can be fully zoomed through and will work with various compact and mirrorless cameras. The full compatibility list can

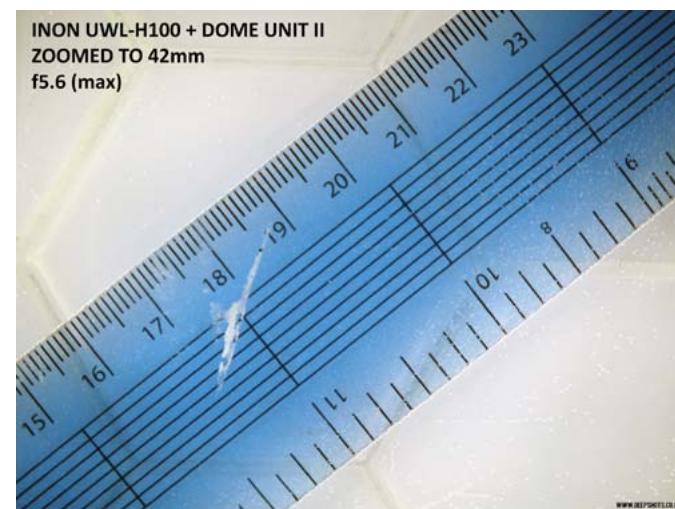
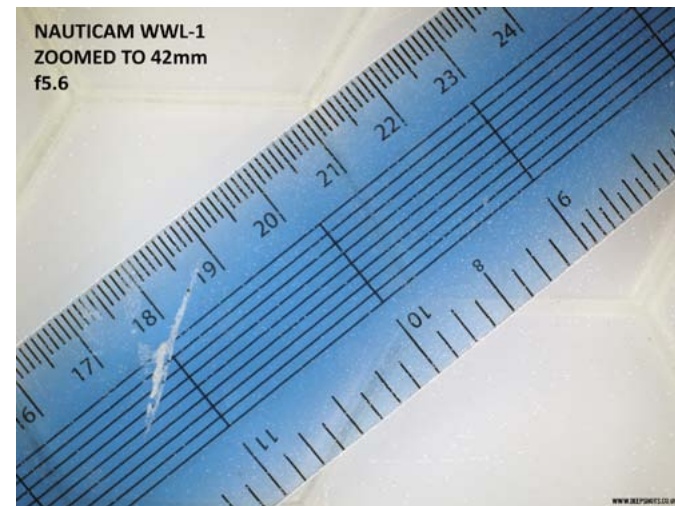
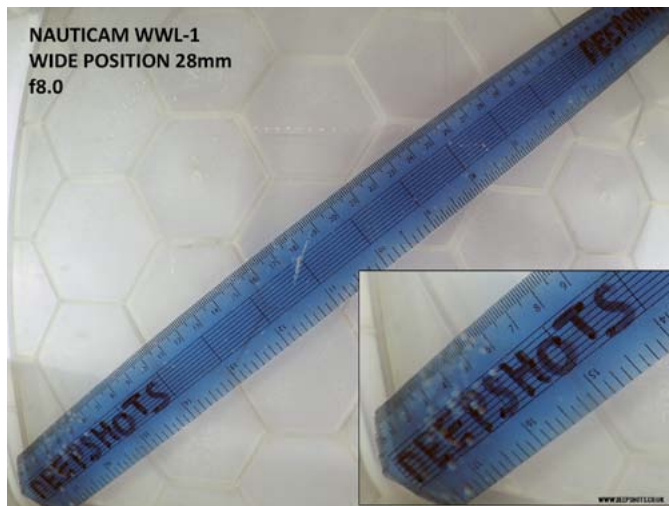
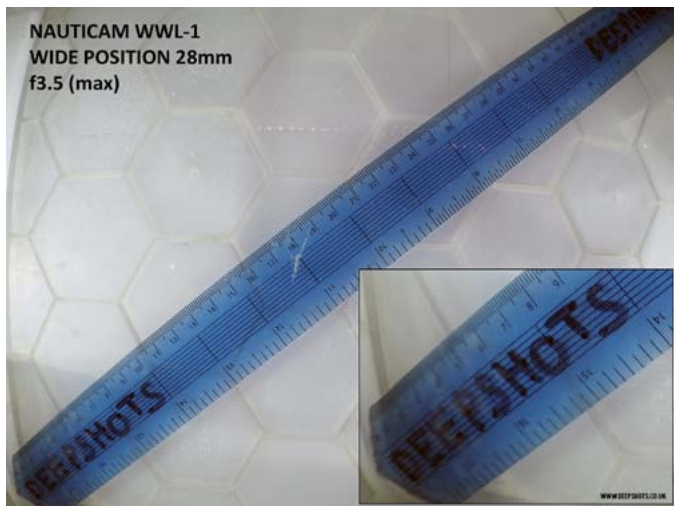


be found on the manufacturers website.

There have been some early reviews of this lens already but I still decided to put it through my test tank to see if the differences can be seen in a not so scientific test. Here I have pinned the WWL-1 against its closest competitor the Inon UWL-H100 M67 lens with the additional glass dome port unit installed, which has so far been the benchmark lens combination when it comes to a sharp underwater wide-angle lens. These images are taken with Olympus PT-EP12 housing and an Olympus 14-42 EZ lens, which is one of the lenses on the company's compatibility chart.

First two pictures are taken at full aperture f3.5 and the following two at f8.0. The last two are taken with the Olympus lens is zoomed to the 42mm position to test that hailed zoomability. Remember that these images are taken with one camera + one lens and you might get different results with different combinations.

As you can see the WWL-1 is sharper both at full aperture and the closed down shots. The difference is not huge but is significant nevertheless. Inon UWL-H100 + Dome unit II seems slightly wider here but that can be argued is due to the fact that in my test tank the housing stays in same



position. Due to the size and especially the length of the WWL-1 its dome sits closer to my trusty old ruler. But would you count the cameras position when testing lenses angle or the front lens' position? All I can say that Inon UWL-H100 + dome unit is wider if the camera is not moved closer. When it comes to the "zoomability" the Inon UWL-H100 combo seems to perform well until the last few mm where it gets a bit soft. The Nauticam WWL-1 is

still pin sharp even when fully zoomed.

The size of the Nauticam lens might put you off but I gotta say the new bayonet system is excellent. It is extremely easy to attach and replace the lens. You will easily do this even in pitch black conditions as the lens just softly slots in to the right position. The Nauticam bayonet system is also more universal than the Inon's system. You can buy the quite a bit smaller and lighter

UWL-H100 lens + dome combo also as a bayonet version, but it will still only fit to a diminishing list of compact housings, Inon has decided to support. The Nauticam bayonet system will fit virtually all housings that have a M67 port thread just by purchasing the port bayonet mount adapter.

All this sharpness and flexibility does not come cheap. The WWL-1 costs £765 and if you want to enjoy the bayonet you will need to add the



Nauticam M67 to Bayonet Mount Converter for £61, bringing the total cost to a £826.00. The Inon lens with a dome port comes to £650.00, but of course you will not have the similar flexibility with mounting options.

Due to the cost of the WWL-1 Nauticam is marketing it not only as a traditional wet-wide-angle lens but also as a replacement of a camera lens and a dome port. Few writs I read about the lens seems to suggest that in some cases with mirrorless systems there is some truth to this. As the WWL-1 lens is sharp and can be zoomed through it is still cheaper to by it than a dry wide angle zoom lens

from Olympus or Panasonic and an dome port. And as it is designed to be a wet lens it keeps the corners sharper than a rectilinear zoom lens behind a dome port would plus the added flexibility of course. Interesting idea. Nauticam has also announced a new port; Macro port 29, to be used with short zooms like the 14-42EZ and the WWL-1

Recommended if you can bear the size and the weight.

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