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## Nikon Coolpix P80 digital camera

Will this get you in the action?

by Stuart Miles published on 16 May 2008

The Nikon P80 is the company's new flagship zoom digital camera offering a whopping 18x optical zoom in a small, compact-ish case, but will it get you into the action? Following our play with a pre-production evaluation sample we got our hands on the final retail model to find out.

Being a zoom-specific camera the design is large and bulky for a compact (110 x 79 x 78mm), but still surprisingly well-packed given its range of capabilities.

The optical zoom, as you would expect, dominates the design and it offers a 27-486mm focal range giving you plenty of zoom capabilities. The back meanwhile sports a 2.7-inch screen and an electronic viewfinder (EVF).

The EVF is okay, but we did notice in our use over time that it isn't very bright, worse still, it dims when zooming only to get lighter again when you stop, something that made us not really want to rely on it.

The camera's layout is straightforward and easy to master and use. The P80 offers 15 scene modes alongside the usual array of P, M, A and auto settings giving you enough control and automation over your picture options.

Inside and the P80 offers a 10-megapixel sensor, ISO from 64 up to 6400 (for image sizes of 3 megapixels or smaller), and the usual array of red-eye fix, AF, and luckily image stabilisation via the camera's sensor shift VR (Vibration Reduction), so at least you can use the zoom without every image being blurry.

Images are saved on an SD card (SDHC is also supported) and the camera also comes with its own internal memory to get you started, although at 50MB, while better than the usual 32MB found with Canon cameras, is still unlikely to get you



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very far without a card.

For the sports photographer out there, no doubt one of the main buyers of a camera like this, there is a Sport Continuous Mode that allows you to shoot up to 30 consecutive pictures at 4, 6 or 13fps; the catch is that image resolution at 13fps is reduced to 3 megapixels rather than the full 10 megapixels displayed on the badge on the side of the camera.

So what's it like to use? In-test, while the zoom works well, you are faced with trying to control that camera shake. While the VR function does work to help improve this, it's clear that without a steady (very steady) hand or tripod you might struggle.

It was something that affected our pre-production sample, but it looks like it's an inherent problem with the camera rather than just refined to something that was due to be fixed. That said, if you've got a steady hand you should be okay.

As for image quality on auto settings the camera had a tendency to increase the ISO settings beyond what you really needed and then give you plenty of noise as a result. While colour representation was very good (the pinks are a little too pink for skin tones) the higher up that ISO chart you go the worse it becomes. Stick to around 64 or 100 and you'll be fine, but venture into the realms of 800 and above and it's very disappointing. Why you would even want to get up to the top setting of 6400 is beyond us.

Another concern we have is the image save times. Image save times were improved, but there is still a split second delay to saving the images to an SD card, which could be annoying if you're in a hurry to get the next shot. It is certainly longer than we would have liked to save before allowing us to take the next picture.

## VERDICT

If you are looking for a big zoom in a small

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## At a glance

### What is it?

10 megapixel zoom digital camera

### Good

18x optical zoom, large display

### Bad

Bulky, some features are only available at 3 megapixels, plenty of noise on images, EVF is awkward to use

### Verdict

It might deliver on the zoom, but noise issues mean this is a disappointing camera from Nikon

**Price** £260

**Our score**

**6/10**

**Your score**

**?/10**

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package then the P80 will give you just that. There are some really nice features on here like the distortion control that will correct the distortion caused by the lens.

However, on closer inspection, while some of our concerns have been fixed from pre-production to final boxed version others have gone unchecked.

Compared to other Nikon cameras we've tested recently, the noise even at low settings isn't great and if you're expecting to shoot above ISO 400, and let's face it you are, then you're likely to be disappointed and that's before you start to work out how you're going to combat the shake.

Disappointing.