

Oregon Scientific ATC-1000 Camera

A while back I was researching my options for a helmet/motorcycle-mounted camera.

I didn't realize the amount of options or the price ranges out there. I've seen several styles that ranged from a stand-alone version to the remote types that require a separate recording device and prices from \$50 to over \$600.

The main reason for the camera was to send riding videos to friends and family. Sort of like a video postcard, except I'm the tour guide. After paying \$66.00 including shipping, for the Oregon Scientific ATC-1000, I was ready to go.

It arrived a few days later in a round plastic shell. Inside the bubble were the camera, the camera mount, and a handlebar mount, mounting straps, instructions, USB cable, TV adapter and software.



Sadly like a kid being disappointed by not being able to play with a great toy on Christmas, the batteries (4 AAA) were not included. But a remote for the DVD kindly donated its power source.

Looking at the camera it's very compact and light, according to my postal scale; it's a mere 5 ounces with batteries and a (not included) SD ram card installed. The manual has the dimensions listed at 35mm x 140mm long.

It's a nice, clean unit. It's splash proof (unlike its waterproof brother ATC-2000) and light. That makes it mount to a helmet cleanly. While wearing the helmet, you don't notice the camera at all. I didn't mount it to my motorcycle for testing, as it's the start of spring and unfortunately in Alaska there is still snow and ice about.

The videos I intend on making are more of me looking around while riding, not so much the "bike point-of-view", like several of the videos that are being passed around. So I chose to mount the camera to the side of my helmet using a strong adhesive instead of using the handlebar mount that was supplied with the camera.



File format of the ACT-1000 is limited to two. .JPG for the stills and .AVI for the motion video.

There is a self timer function, that offers a 10 second delay for those that want to photograph themselves, and a continuous shutter that takes 3 pictures consecutively for those action stills, these features can be accessed through the menu.

Taking pictures with the ACT-1000 is simple; you just press the button, near the back of the camera. This button is clearly identified by having a picture of a camera stamped in to it.

The ACT-1000 has several selections of resolution you can choose from. In photo mode you have the choice of: 640x480 pixels, 320x240 pixels & 160x120 pixels

The still pictures aren't the greatest, but they aren't the worst either. If you're expecting the quality of the modern 10mp camera, you're going to be disappointed. The pictures are more like the early VGA resolution cameras. The pictures were clear, perfect for email, and for use in forums/groups, just limited in size.

Recording video is just as simple; the Video button has an image of a video camera on it and is located in the form of the camera. When you depress either button, the camera confirms your choice by emitting a "beep."

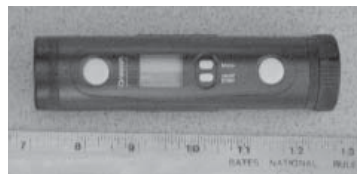
During video mode its still just one beep for start and one for finish. I would rather have it beep once for start and two for finish.

The ACT-1000 also offers three selections of video modes with varying frames per second. These are: 640x480 pixels @15fps, 320x240 pixels @20fps & 160x120 pixels @ 25fps

The video is only as smooth as your movements and

can vary by how well you mount the camera. Putting the camera on my helmet seemed to work out great. The Panning and tracking were smooth.

I shot video standing on my front porch. It was in the afternoon with a lot of daylight. Upon playback, I noticed the amount of light that was reflecting of the snow, coupled with the brightly lit sky washed out a lot of the video. Taking video of my dogs indoors in medium light produced a low light video.



In normal dawn to dusk, I wouldn't see a problem with the camera. However, using at

night is not advisable and will yield a very dark video and I wouldn't use it for winter sports due to the light washout.

There is a built in microphone in the front of the camera that is pretty sensitive. This will pose wind noise problems. Microphone windsock material glued over the mike should help with this problem.

Storage of the still pictures and video can either take place using the internal 35MB storage or up to 1GB via a SD card.

The display on the camera is minor. It consists of icons and numbers. The Icons show low battery, resolution, SD card presence, file deletion, and self-timer. The numbers are display the amount of photographs you have left and the amount of minutes of video you have taken. Due to size restraints when using a large SD card in the camera, the camera will display "9999." Not to worry, it does this because it has only four placements for the digits. As soon as you get to picture 9998, the numbers will reduce with each picture taken.

File deletion is limited to the last picture/video taken or all of them. The amount of video/stills is limited only by the amount of memory you have.

Battery life isn't the best out there, but it's not bad either, considering its using 4 AAA batteries. I'll write up a separate batter review

later, as batteries differ in quality.

The camera has an auto shut off feature that will shut down the camera in 10 minutes of inactivity.

A nice feature of the camera is that it hooks directly to your PC for downloading the images and video, you can also hook the camera directly to your television through RCA jacks (Camera adaptor included) for viewing.

The editing software is pretty straightforward, the instructions are lacking in depth, and the software tends to be slow (I'm running a P4 3Ghz, 2gb RAM, 512MB 3dVideo).

The software has many features. These include the ability to trim the video clip, 100 animations in different categories, Audio dubbing, and the ability to add different video clips for create a mini-movie.

One thing about the Action lab software mentioned in the manual was that although a 1GB card will hold about an hour of video, they recommend keeping each individual video clip to 15minutes. I tested this. It took quite a while for a 15 min. video to lead in the editing software, and I gave up waiting on the 45 min. video I took.

I still prefer using Windows movie maker, or Studio plus for editing over the included software. Not that I'm taking away anything from Action Lab, its more of a "stay with what you know" scenario.

All and all I'm pleased with this camera. For \$50, it's a bargain for sharing your videos and riding pictures with friends.



KJ Shover #5057 - Fairbanks, Alaska

