

Gadgets: Digital photo gift ideas

November 19 2009, By Gregg Ellman



The Gorillapod SLR-Zoom flexible tripod.

Once again it's that shopping time of year and if digital photography is on your shopping list, here is a roundup of accessories to kick off the season.

The Gorillapod SLR-Zoom from Joby is a flexible tripod that can be used almost anywhere.

Besides having the traditional three legs to stand upright on any flat surface, this unit has flexible legs that can wrap around most anything. Rubberized foot grips keep it stable, even on most slanted or slippery surfaces _ even door knobs, car handles, trees and street lights. If the legs can go around it, this will hold up your camera ^- even most of today's bigger SLR models (up to 6.5 lbs.)

The ability to attach to most anything allows the device to act as a larger tripod without the legs and bulk of bigger models.

More than two dozen leg-joints enable it to bend and rotate 360-degrees for secure attachment. Users can also purchase a Joby Ballhead for even more flexibility.

Details: joby.com, SLR-Zoom, \$49.95; ballhead, \$39.95; or both, \$79.95

[Kodak](#) has added the ESP 5250 All-in-One printer (print/copy/scan) to its line of ink cost-saving printers.

Just like the previous models introduced in the last few years, the new unit delivers a big savings on ink since the cost of replacement Kodak ink is the lowest in the industry.

The high-quality pigment ink cartridges print documents and photo lab quality photos, which are also stain and water resistant.

Other features include a paper tray system, which will automatically adjust based on the size and paper type. This results in less of those nagging printer errors that we all get from time to time.

A color 2.4-inch LDC can be used to print directly from a memory card without needing a computer.

My favorite feature is the built-in Wi-Fi, which let me print from anywhere in my house, cable-free from my laptop.

While the printer is loaded with great features, biggest attraction is the cost of the ink. The black cartridge retails for \$9.99, while a five-ink color replacement will sell for \$14.99.

Details: kodak.com, \$169.99

Verbatim has a new Universal Card Reader and a 32GB memory card, which make a great choice for most any digital photographer shooting video or still images.

The reader is an ideal solution for transferring digital photos to any Mac or Windows computer. It features a One-Touch Copy button that instantly copies the memory card's contents to a Windows PC. Mac users, such as myself, can use it as a traditional hardware-downloading tool.

It attaches to any USB 2.0 port (will also work on USB 1, but just a little slower) and works in a plug and play manner.

Just about every type of removable memory is supported including CompactFlash, SD and SDHC. It also supports MicroSD cards, which are in many of today's cell phones.

The 32GB Premium SDHC Card delivers the industry's fastest performance since it's Class 6 rated. That means users will get minimum write and read speeds of (60X) 9MB and (133X) 20MB per second respectively.

Since many of today's digital cameras shoot large JPG files or HD video, the larger sized [memory cards](#) like this are perfect for thousands of images and or hours of video.

Owners of SDHC memory card enabled camera equipment must remember that a SDHC-enabled card reader must be used with these type of cards, such as the one described above.

Details: Verbatim.com, Premium SDHC Card, \$99; Universal Card Reader, \$22

Camera choices can be a little overwhelming, especially in the point and shoot category.

These days users shouldn't be consumed with megapixels, since all are more than what the average photographer needs. Instead they should look at getting specific features in a camera, which will be suitable for the photographs they want to produce.

A few weeks ago I used the 12-megapixel Panasonic LUMIX DMC-ZR1 and came away very impressed.

It features the world's first 0.3mm thin aspherical lens, which the company is real proud of. What I liked was the 25mm ultra-wide-angle, 8x optical zoom Leica lens, which yields an optical-zoom of 25mm to 200mm. This produced incredibly crisp and clear images in a camera that I considered very solid. Images up to 800 ISO were great and noise started to appear as expected at 1600.

Other features include 29 scene models, a 2.7-inch LCD, auto-focus tracking, and a video mode. Videos can be taken at 720p high-definition MPEG-4 files (30 frames per second).

One thing it didn't include, which didn't bother me, was a viewfinder.

The ZR1 is available in black, blue, red, and silver for \$279.95.

Details: panasonic.com, \$279.95

The Olympus Stylus Tough 8000 is one of the most versatile cameras on the market today.

As the name states, the camera performs in tough situations both on land and in the water.

The 12-megapixel camera has 3.6x optical zoom lens (28mm to 102mm) and a 2.7-inch LCD. What makes this important is you can use it in water up to 33-feet deep, or on land in temperatures as low as 14 degrees.

One thing Olympus states about the camera is that it's able to withstand a drop from up to six feet, but I chose to not test this.

I did take the camera on a snorkeling trip this past summer and the camera perform outstanding in the water. Using the underwater scene setting, I took hundreds of [photos](#) without changing batteries.

The lens is hidden behind a metal cover, which slides down when the power is on.

Although the camera is waterproof, this is only true when the battery and cable port doors are closed. As a precaution, users should open and close the doors (you will hear a little snap) before heading in the water.

The camera features Tap Control for a few settings. This is where you can simply tap the camera to get it to do some of the things you want Â—for example changing the scene or lens mode, or turning the flash on and off.

Details: Olympus.com, \$299

A nice accessory for digital SLR cameras that have a pop-up flash is the Professor Kobre's Light Scoop.

This device helps get better flash photography results. The built-in flash often results in unflattering and harsh results. This includes shadows, washed out faces and the hated red eye.

Using the Light Scoop will soften the light and redirect it, resulting in much better images.

The installation takes a second since you just place it over the existing pop-up flash and follow a few set-up instructions based on what camera it's used with and the environment you are shooting in.

Once you get past this, the light will be directed to the ceiling, which creates a greater amount of diffused light on your subject, resulting in a more natural image.

At first I was skeptical, but the results are pretty amazing.

Details: lightscoop.com, standard or warming models, \$34.95 each

CVS/pharmacy has re-launched CVSPhoto.com and new customers can get 50 free prints after registering.

The site, which is easy to navigate, is loaded with features including holiday greeting cards in a variety of styles and themes.

Users can transform a photo of their own into an animated character and get prints made where they then interact with other cartoon heroes such as Barney or Spiderman.

Other options include custom cover photo books, which feature your photo on the cover of a personalized photo book. Dishwasher-safe character plates and platters can also be made.

Details: CVSPhoto.com

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