

# Review: Samsung fuses tablet, camera

January 2 2013, by Jim Rossman

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In the few weeks I've been testing the Samsung Galaxy Camera, I've been trying to figure out which market Samsung is out to capture.

The Galaxy is a point-and-shoot camera with a small Android 4G tablet built in.

The back of the camera is just a 4.8-inch, high-definition LCD [touch](#)

[screen](#) that [switches](#) between the camera's [operating system](#) and Android 4.1 ([Jelly Bean](#)) at the press of a button.

When powered on, it's a camera that's ready to take pictures with its 21x optical [zoom](#) lens. When you need to send an [email](#), just press the home button on the screen and the Galaxy Camera changes over to Android, ready to let you use any Android app.

The Android OS on the camera is connected via AT&T's or Verizon's 4G network. You need to add it to your family's data plan, but it can't make phone calls.

It's a camera phone without the phone.

Oh, and it costs \$499.99 from AT&T or \$549.99 from Verizon, plus the monthly cost of adding it to your data plan, which, for a 4G tablet, will cost \$10 per month if you have an existing family plan with shared data.

This puts the Galaxy camera at the top of the point-and-shoot camera market. If you've read this far and are wondering, "Where can I get one today?" I'm sure you'll enjoy it.

If you're like me, though, you're scratching your head and wondering whether you need an expensive camera with a monthly fee to use 4G when your iPhone or Android phone will do largely the same thing.

I'll give you my take.

With smartphone cameras getting better and better, the traditional point-and-shoot camera is fading into obscurity. Smartphones are also having the same effect on stand-alone GPS navigation devices, but that's a story for another day.

Most people carry their smartphones everywhere, and when the need to take a quick picture presents itself, they'll whip out their phone and snap away.

Your smartphone is fine for 75 percent of your photo needs, and it's in your pocket or purse.

But what if you're going to the zoo or on a European vacation or acting as the official family Christmas photographer? You'll likely be reaching for a camera with a zoom lens and a decent flash.

The 16-megapixel Galaxy Camera seems the best of both of those worlds, except that it can't make phone calls.

So how is it as a camera?

Pretty good.

The 21x optical zoom (23-483 mm equivalent in 35 mm) has a maximum aperture of 2.8-5.9. That's more than enough zoom range for any situation. I did find, though, that the zoom tended to take its time while focusing and there's a fair amount of shutter lag (that time between you pressing the shutter and the picture being snapped).

There's full manual mode for the experts and auto mode for the beginners. There are also a lot of smart modes that you can choose, depending on the situation, such as fireworks, waterfalls, landscapes, macro (close-up), portraits and a few modes that will take multiple photos and let you choose the best.

There's also a burst mode that shoots 20 pictures in a row.

Besides 4G, the camera also has Wi-Fi and Bluetooth connectivity and

the ability to create its own Wi-Fi network between devices for instant sharing.

You can share your photos to Facebook or Twitter as you shoot them, just as you can on your smartphone.

There is also a small speaker and microphone, so I suppose you could make Skype calls if you were so inclined.

Battery life is where things get dicey.

[Samsung](#) says the battery will last 4.5 hours, which may or may not be a full day of shooting, depending on your shooting style, but the battery is replaceable, so you can carry a spare.

The camera also shoots 1080p HD video and has a mode to shoot 720p video at 120 frames per second, which plays back in a beautiful and clear slow motion.

The Galaxy camera also obeys voice commands to zoom in or out, set the self-timer and shoot a photo, but talking to the camera seems a bit strange when the controls are right there in your hands.

Because the camera has a powerful 1.4 GHz quad-core CPU, it opens up new possibilities for in-camera photo editing.

Samsung includes a photo wizard that allows the user to edit photos and apply Instagram-like effects.

If you're starting to think Samsung has included every feature it could think of, you're right. I can't think of any major feature Samsung has omitted.

The Galaxy Camera is a first stab at proving that there's a market for such a device.

It's a great camera and a nice Android tablet.

At almost 11 ounces, it's heavy, and while it's a thin camera, it's too big to fit in a pants pocket. It's more than four times thicker than my iPhone 5.

I have to applaud Samsung for making the Galaxy Camera. It might be the next big thing - or not.

It's the first of its kind, and that's how advancements happen. Someone has to be the first to market, and I think we'll be seeing more of this type of gadget in the future.

The camera is certainly full-featured, and the [Android](#) OS and large screen really make the experience pleasant.

The challenge is going to be getting people to carry it around as much as they do their phones.

If the Galaxy Camera were an actual telephone, I think it would be an easier sell. Some people would ditch their old cellphones and carry it around. Maybe not millions of people, but some would.

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## SAMSUNG GALAXY CAMERA:

-Pros: Great lens, nice touch-screen. Ability to send photos from the camera via 4G.

-Cons: Expensive, data plan adds to cost, short battery life, shutter lag.

-Bottom line: Kudos to Samsung for making the Galaxy Camera. I hope there's a market for it.

-Price: \$499.99-\$549.99, plus wireless plan

-On the Web: [samsung.com](http://samsung.com)

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Citation: Review: Samsung fuses tablet, camera (2013, January 2) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-01-samsung-fuses-tablet-camera.html>

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