

Tech review: Nikon's P900 takes the term 'super zoom' to a new level

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Not too many people know I went to college to become a newspaper photographer.

I began shooting pictures in high school and continued in college, graduating with a communications degree with an emphasis on photojournalism.

The first camera I saved up for and purchased with my own money was a Nikon FG, so shooting with the Nikon P900 (\$599.95, www.nikonusa.com) for the last week has been a walk down memory lane for me.

The P900 is a bridge camera.

I wasn't familiar with the term until this week, but it makes perfect sense - it's a bridge between the pocket camera and a full-blown DSLR.

The P900 is an all-in-one - it does not have interchangeable lenses. But the lens it has is a doozy.

The P900 is in a subcategory of cameras called super zooms.

Nikon and Canon seem locked in battle to best each other with longer and longer zoom range.

The Nikon P900 is the new champ.

The P900 has an 83x optical zoom lens, which is the 35 mm equivalent of 24 mm-2,000 mm.

If you know what those numbers mean, you know that is an unbelievable range.

For comparison's sake, Canon's latest super zoom camera, the Powershot SX 60 HS, has a zoom range of 65x, but it's a bit wider with a 35 mm equivalent range of 21 mm-1,365 mm.

The Nikon's range is so long that you'll need a tripod or monopod to use the camera zoomed in all the way.

The Nikkor ED VR (vibration reduction) lens is sharp at the lower end of the range and not too shabby at the high end. The autofocus speed is very fast, and I found the shutter lag (the time between pushing the shutter button and taking the picture) to be quite good.

The lens has an aperture of f/2.8 at the wide end up to f/6.5 when zoomed fully.

When fully extended, the lens doubles the length of the camera.

The P900 has a 16-megapixel CMOS sensor that measures { .3-inch. Image size is 4,608 by 3,456 pixels.

The rear screen measures 3 inches with a resolution of 921,000 dots that swivels out and rotates to let you easily frame your shots from high or low angles. It's not a touch screen. You make adjustments with buttons and dials.

There is a high-resolution electronic viewfinder that turns on automatically when you raise the camera to your eye. The viewfinder is actually a tiny monitor, not an actual optical view of the scene.

The P900's body is sturdy, with natural spots for your fingers to rest

while you shoot. It's pleasing to hold and easy to use, but the navigation ring on the back is a bit small for my big hands.

There are dual zoom controls, one on the shutter button and one on the left side of the lens. Using either zoom control was easy.

It has built-in Wi-Fi connectivity along with near field communication, or NFC, and GPS for geotagging pictures.

There is a Wi-Fi button on the back. Press it and the camera starts broadcasting its own wireless network. Connect your phone to it, and you have lots of choices.

There is a free app for iOS and Android devices that allows the camera to wirelessly offload its photos to a smartphone or tablet. The app also lets you see the camera's viewfinder, adjust the zoom and snap photos.

If you have an Android phone with NFC, you can tap the devices to create a connection.

The camera has the usual automatic and semi-automatic (aperture priority and shutter priority) shooting modes, along with full manual controls and plenty of scene modes. There are also digital effects (think Instagram filters) that can be applied.

Its ISO range is 100-1600 with program modes that extend the ISO range to 6400.

The camera's motor can shoot at 7 frames per second.

The shutter range is 00-second to 15 seconds.

There is no raw mode; photos are captured as JPEG only.

The P900 records 1080p HD video and has a dedicated video button on the rear. You can zoom during video recording, and the P900 also has built-in stereo microphones.

The P900 is no pocket camera. It's similar in size and weight to my Canon DSLR camera with its lens.

It weighs 31.8 ounces with memory card and battery installed.

The battery is charged inside the camera via microUSB port, and it's good for 360 shots or 1 hour 20 minutes of video per charge.

Recharging the battery takes 3 hours 40 minutes.

So far, the P900 sounds like all the camera you'll ever need, right?

Very likely yes, with some caveats.

I took the P900 to a family reunion last weekend, and in a dark hall, the P900's flash made some nice photos.

This would be a great camera for sports during the day, but it even takes nice photos of the moon.

If you want a camera you can slip into your shirt pocket, there are better choices. But it's hard not to wonder whether the P900 might be the last camera you'll ever need to buy.

That's an interesting concept.

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Pros: Great lens, articulating rear screen, Wi-Fi.

Cons: Expensive, no raw mode.

Bottom line: This [camera](#) is all most of us will ever need.

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