



Best Buy cameras for summer holidays

Our tests reveal the best digital cameras for your travels, plus tips on sharing your holiday photos online

A holiday is a great time to experiment with photography. The latest digital cameras are designed to help you take better pictures than ever, and are packed with useful features that make it easier to capture some great shots.

You can pick up an ultra-slim camera for a very reasonable price, and these compact models are easy to slip into your pocket while out-and-about on holiday. Even slim digital cameras often have image stabilisation and face detection technology, making photography easier.

If you fancy getting closer to far-off subjects, it's worth considering a superzoom bridge camera. With impressive lens magnifications, models such as the Best Buy Canon SX1 IS are great for photographing wildlife from afar.

Most digital cameras come with scene modes – selecting a scene mode quickly gives the ideal picture settings for certain photography conditions, such as a sunset or starry night sky.

When you return from your travels, there's plenty you can do with your digital pictures. Photo-sharing websites such as Flickr and Facebook let you

create online photo albums for sharing with your friends. This is a great way of sharing pictures without having to attach large files to emails, and friends and family can leave comments next to your photos.

We've tested 22 of the latest digital cameras to help you choose the right model for you and your holiday. For more reviews and advice on getting the most out of your digital photography, log on to www.which.co.uk/digitalcameras, where you can find in-depth reviews of over 260 digital cameras. Plus see p52 for Best Buy photo processing services.

Checklist

What to look for when buying a digital compact camera for use on holiday

■ Resolution

High resolutions (measured in megapixels) let you enlarge pictures when printing.

■ Wide lens angle

The small number on the zoom range (such as 28-140mm); the smaller this is, the easier it will be to take group and landscape shots.

■ Tele lens angle

The large number on the zoom range; the bigger this is, the further you can zoom on distant subjects.

■ Memory card

Not all memory cards will be compatible with every camera, so check before you buy.

■ Image stabiliser

A sensitive mechanical adjustment that helps the camera compensate for shaky hands.

■ Anti-blur

A digital method of reducing blurring. It's not as effective as a mechanical image stabiliser, though.



78% Canon PowerShot SX10 IS £322

A superzoom camera with a powerful x20 lens, a great range of manual controls and impressive image quality. Colour reproduction is good, and it performs well in bright daylight and indoors. It's ideal for shooting faraway holiday scenery thanks to the huge lens, though this makes it heavier than most, at 712g. The zoom starts from a wide angle of 28mm, which is helpful for fitting in wider landscapes.

It has an image stabiliser, an electronic viewfinder, manual focus and priority modes for aperture and shutter speed. It's very quick in operation, and is ready to go just two seconds after switching on. **WE LIKE** You can adjust the strength of the microphone and its wind filter when using the camera's video mode.

Size 12.5x9x10.5cm **Weight** 712g **Resolution** 10Mp **Zoom** 28-560mm (x20) **Scene modes** 13 **Face detection** Yes **Cheapest** Online **Also available** Comet, Currys



74% Canon Digital Ixus 870 IS £215

Slim, stylish and speedy, this Canon boasts impressive image quality for a camera of this class. At just 181g, it will slip easily into your pocket or handbag. The x4 optical zoom is relatively small, but it starts at a decent wide angle of 28mm, and there's an optical image stabiliser built in. It gives a good performance in low light, though it handles bright daylight photography far better, with sharp images and good

colour reproduction. The monitor is clear and sharp, letting you view pictures and movies with ease. It's ready to go 1.64 seconds after switching on, and there's a lag of only two seconds between shots. **WORTH KNOWING** You can raise the ISO to 3200 to make it sensitive in low light, but this limits resolution to 2Mp.

Size 9.5x6x2.5cm **Weight** 181g **Resolution** 10Mp **Zoom** 28-112mm (x4) **Scene modes** 13 **Face detection** Yes **Cheapest** Online **Also available** Currys, Jessops



74% Canon PowerShot SX1 IS £450

This outstanding Canon isn't cheap, but it's a powerful camera with a mighty x20 zoom lens, plenty of features and a huge degree of manual control. However, as with the Canon SX10 IS, the 28-560mm lens makes it relatively heavy. You can flip and rotate the screen to change its viewing angle, and there's an electronic viewfinder. Pictures taken in natural light are sharply focused with great colour reproduction, but it doesn't handle low light too well.

Macro performance is extremely good, so you'll be able to take great close-up shots, and video quality is better than most. It's fast, too – you'll have to wait only around 1.6 seconds between shots. **WE LIKE** You can attach an external flash using the camera's hot-shoe connector – unusual on non-DSLRs.

Size 12.5x9x10cm **Weight** 726g **Resolution** 10Mp **Zoom** 28-560mm (x20) **Scene modes** 14 **Face detection** Yes **Cheapest** Online **Also available** Jessops

Top tips for taking holiday photos

Make sure you capture great holiday memories with our guide

KNOW YOUR CAMERA

Read your manual thoroughly and experiment with settings before you set off. If your camera has manual functions, adjust shutter speeds, apertures, ISO settings and features such as white balance to get a feel for how they affect photos.



SCENE MODES

These give the ideal settings for getting the best pictures in certain conditions, such as a sunset mode to help bring out the reds and yellows.

CLOSE-UPS

Rather than relying on wide shots capturing entire scenes,

try some detailed close-ups of interesting subjects – most cameras have a macro mode to help with this.

PHOTOGRAPHING CHILDREN

Try to avoid standing over children and aiming the camera down. You can get a

better shot by crouching low and photographing at their own level.

COMPOSE OFF-CENTRE

Pictures tend to look more pleasing when the subject isn't in the middle. Centre your subject initially to autofocus before panning to capture more background.





which?
BEST BUY

70% Casio Exilim EX-FH20 £342

This is another good choice if you want to get closer to your subjects without opting for a DSLR, and it gives a good range of manual controls. The standout feature is the x20 optical zoom, which starts from a wide angle of 26mm – great for wider landscape shots, but it does add to the camera's weight. Picture quality is generally good without being outstanding. Colour reproduction is good too, and the EX-FH20 takes excellent

images close up. However, the camera is less impressive in indoor and low-light conditions, where grainy images can be a problem. Our testers were impressed with its video-recording mode.

WE LIKE By setting the video mode to 1,000 frames per second you can play back videos in smooth slow motion.

Size 15x8x9.5cm **Weight** 641g **Resolution** 9Mp **Zoom** 26-520mm (x20) **Scene modes** 18 'Best Shot' plus one user-defined **Face detection** Yes **Cheapest at** John Lewis **Also available** Currys, Jessops



which?
BEST BUY

70% Casio Exilim EX-Z400 £225

This great pocket-sized camera weighs just 160g, and has a good range of features. Picture quality is generally impressive, though it's best in bright daylight conditions, where it does a good job of picking up subtle colour contrasts and distinguishing between shadows and highlights. Even in low light the EX-Z400 works well, delivering impressive shots that aren't too grainy. There are an impressive 34 scene

modes to experiment with, and a built-in image stabiliser to help reduce blurring, though our tests revealed the improvement to be underwhelming.

WORTH KNOWING The EX-Z400 has a very poor macro mode, so this isn't a great camera for detailed close-up photography.

Size 10x6x2.3cm **Weight** 160g **Resolution** 12Mp **Zoom** 28-112mm (x4) **Scene modes** 34 **Face detection** Yes **Available** Online only



which?
BEST BUY

68% Samsung WB500 £200

This Samsung has a large x10 optical zoom lens that lets you get close to distant subjects. The lens starts from an uncommon wide angle of 24mm, which gives you a huge degree of freedom when trying to fit in tight indoor group shots or broad landscapes. Shots are sharply focused and the colour reproduction is particularly accurate in bright daylight, though we found that

the WB500's performance flags a bit in dim-light conditions. There's an image stabiliser built in.

WE LIKE The generous 24mm wide angle lens setting lets you fit in broad landscapes or indoor group shots without having to step far back from your subject.

Size 10.5x6.5x4cm **Weight** 242g **Resolution** 10Mp **Zoom** 24-240mm (x10) **Scene modes** 16 **Face detection** Yes **Cheapest** Online **Also available** Comet, Currys

which?
EXCEPTIONAL VALUE

Share holiday photos online

Invite family and friends to view your holiday photos for free on Facebook or Flickr

SIGN UP

Signing up to Facebook is free, and there's no limit on the number of photos you can upload. It's also free to create a basic Flickr account, but this limits each user to 100MB of photo uploads per month, a maximum file size of 10MB, and a maximum of three sets of photos. If you're planning to

upload a large number of photos, you may be better off using another photo-sharing website, or paying to upgrade to a 'Pro' Flickr account.

UPLOADING

Flickr and Facebook both feature uploading software that you can install quickly onto your computer. This makes it easy

to select pictures for uploading. You can organise photos into albums, add captions to your pictures, write descriptions and annotate them to draw attention to points of interest.

SHARING PICTURES

You can make your online albums viewable by anyone, all your friends or select individuals.

STORING PHOTOS ONLINE

With Flickr, photos are resized to fit on the screen, though they're all still saved on Flickr's servers in their original resolution. Other sites, such as Facebook, shrink pictures as you upload them, so make sure you keep the original files elsewhere if you want full-resolution copies – essential for getting quality prints.

WHICH GADGETS DO YOU REALLY NEED?



Digital cameras

VS



Cameraphones

With cameraphones increasing in quality, do you need a digital camera at all?

Cameraphones are becoming increasingly sophisticated, but even the best can't match the performance of a dedicated digital camera.

Some new cameraphones, such as the LG Renoir or the Sony Ericsson C905, boast 8Mp picture resolutions – this is useful if you're enlarging pictures when printing, but great picture quality isn't determined by resolution alone.

POOR LIGHT

The small image sensors built into cameraphones make them poor at capturing pictures in low light, according to Which? tests. Cameraphones rarely feature proper xenon flashes to help in low-light situations, though models such as the LG Renoir are bucking this trend.

ZOOMING IN

Cameraphones also lack optical zoom lenses, limiting you to digital zoom for faraway subjects, which will affect the image quality. The time it takes to autofocus and a slow shutter delay can mean missing more fleeting moments.

STORING PHOTOS

Like digital cameras, most cameraphones store photos as Jpeg files on to a memory card, and transferring these onto a PC or getting prints is generally easy.

VERDICT

Most cameraphones perform well in bright daylight and, if you only have one camera in your party, they're a great backup for taking additional shots.

Camcorders

Can digital cameras double up as quick-and-easy alternatives to camcorders?

Most compact cameras have video modes and can be used instead of a camcorder – but with some limitations.

VIDEO RECORDING

An increasing number of digital cameras, such as the Casio Exilim EX-Z400, boast high-definition video recording. While this can mean an improved video resolution, there's no substitute for a proper camcorder if you're keen on capturing family videos in the highest possible quality.

DETAIL

The relatively small lenses and image sensors on digital cameras tend to limit the detail of your videos, and subtle colour distinctions, differences in shadow and highlight, and the

smoothness of panning shots often disappoint.

Some cameras don't allow you to use the optical zoom while recording videos or, like the Samsung S1070, force you to mute the sound as you do so.

SOUND QUALITY

The small microphones built into digital cameras often mean the sound quality of your videos will be very poor. Camcorders have superior built-in mics, and usually allow you to attach an external mic for improved sound.

VERDICT

Digital camcorders can't capture still photos to rival a digital camera's, so to get the very best photos and videos of your holiday, you may want to consider packing both devices.

USING THE TABLE

The more stars the better.

Specification

Price See pricing information, p41.

Resolution The number of megapixels an image contains.

Weight With lens cap, strap, battery and memory card.

Optical zoom factor The maximum magnification possible – based on the optical zoom range (mm).

Video zoom recording Whether zoom is

available when shooting video and whether it's optical (O) or digital (D). Optical gives better quality.

Scene modes Pre-set settings for taking good photos in a variety of situations, such as sports photos.

Image stabilisation A ✓ shows the camera has a mechanical image stabiliser either built into the lens (optical IS) or into the body of the camera.

Face detection Useful for taking

people shots. **ISO** A higher number gives you more potential to take dim light shots without flash. However, choosing high settings can introduce noise – small, random speckles detracting from image quality. **Shutter delay** The time it takes for the camera to take the picture, after you have pressed the button from a completely unpressed position. This is opposed to a half-pressed position, which cuts shutter

delay considerably.

Viewfinder/LCD

The clarity and accuracy of the LCD, and the viewfinder if one exists. **Features** The amount and usefulness of the camera's features.

Score

Ignores price and is based on:

Image quality	30%
Ease of use	25%
Features	12%
Viewfinder/LCD	12%
Battery life	10%
Flash	8%
Movie quality	3%



If you've bought one of our Best Buy digital cameras, tell us what you think of it at www.which.co.uk/digitalcameras. You can also read user reviews by other members. For example, Mobius6 praised the Canon PowerShot SX10 IS for being 'fast, easy to use, with a fantastic zoom. Excellent value for money.'

MODEL		SPECIFICATION												SHUTTER DELAY
		PRICE (£)	RESOLUTION	SIZE (HXWXD) (CM)	WEIGHT (G)	LCD SCREEN (MM) (WXH)	OPTICAL ZOOM RANGE (MM)	OPTICAL ZOOM FACTOR	VIDEO ZOOM RECORDING	SCENE MODES	IMAGE STABILISATION	FACE DETECTION	MAX MANUALLY SELECTABLE ISO	
1	CANON PowerShot SX10 IS	322	10	12.5x9x10.5	712	50x38	28-560	x20	O	13	✓	✓	3,200	★★★★★
2	CANON Digital Ixus 870 IS	215	10	9.5x6x2.5	181	60x45	28-112	x4	D	13	✓	✓	3,200	★★★★★
3	CANON PowerShot SX1 IS	450	10	12.5x9x10	726	63x36	28-560	x20	O	14	✓	✓	3,200	★★★★★
4	CASIO Exilim EX-FH20	342	9	13x8.5x9.5	641	60x46	26-520	x20	O ^a	18	✓	✓	1,600	★★★★★
5	CASIO Exilim EX-Z400	225	12	10x6x2.3	160	60x45	28-112	x4	D	34	✓	✓	3,200	★★★★★
6	SAMSUNG WB500	200	10	10.5x6.5x4	242	54x40	24-240	x10	O	16	✓	✓	3,200	★★★★★
7	PANASONIC Lumix DMC-FS15	170	12	10x6x2.3	140	54x40	29-145	x5	No	24	✓	✓	6,400	★★★★
8	PENTAX Optio M60	120	10	10x5.5x2.5	129	50x37	36-180	x5	D	18		✓	6,400	★★★★★
9	PANASONIC Lumix DMC-FX37	170	10	9.5x5.5x2.4	147	50x37	25-125	x5	No	25	✓	✓	6,400	★★★★
10	PANASONIC Lumix DMC-LS85	80	8	9.5x6.5x3	187	51x38	33-132	x4	No	20	✓	✓	6,400	★★★★
11	OLYMPUS mju Tough 6000	200	10	9.5x6.5x2.5	171	54x40	28-102	x3.6	D	20	✓	✓	1,600	★★★★
12	CASIO Exilim EX-Z85	100	9	9x5.5x1.9	118	56x36	38-114	x3	D	26		✓	1,600	★★★★★
13	NIKON Coolpix S560	160	10	10x5.5x2.5	146	54x40	34.8-174	x5	No	15	✓	✓	3,200	★★★★★
14	SONY Cyber-shot DSC-T77	195	10	9.5x6x1.7	153	65x37	35-140	x4	O	11	✓	✓	3,200	★★★★★
15	KODAK EasyShare M1093 IS	132	10	10x6x2.1	151	60x45	35-105	x3	O	20	✓	✓	6,400	★★★★★
16	SAMSUNG S1070	85	10	9.5x5.5x3	186	54x40	35-105	x3	O ^a	11		✓	1,600	★★★★★
17	NIKON Coolpix S60	200	10	10x6x2.3	164	76x43	33-165	x5	DI	15	✓	✓	3,200	★★★★★
18	SONY Cyber-shot DSC-T500	200	10	10.5x6.5x2.3	180	76x43	33-165	x5	O	9	✓	✓	3,200	★★★★★
19	OLYMPUS FE-20	105	8	10x6x2.2	122	50x38	36-108	x3	O	13		✓	1,000	★★★
20	SANYO Xacti VPC-S870EX	135	8	9.5x6.5x3	185	48x36	35-105	x3	No	13		✓ ^b	1,000	★
21	ROLLEI XS-10	105	10	9.5x6x2.2	137	60x45	31-94	x3	No	16		✓	400	★★
22	PRAKTIKA Dpix 910Z	75	9	9x6.5x3	179	48x35	36-108	x3	O	5			800	★

^a Sound is muted during zoom operation ^b Only in scene mode 'portrait' or 'night portrait'

BEST BUY COMPETITION

Win a Best Buy digital photography package worth £500

We are giving three lucky readers the chance to win a Best Buy digital camera (Canon PowerShot SX10 IS) with a 8GB memory card (SanDisk 8GB SDHC), a digital camera case (Lowepro Apex 100AW) and a digital photo frame (Sony DPFV900). To enter, answer this question:

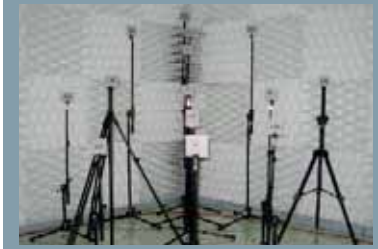
The Canon Powershot

SX10 IS has been rated a Which? Best Buy. What was its score?
a) 74% b) 78% c) 68%

Enter online at www.which.co.uk/bestbuycompetition or on a postcard to 'Best Buy June 09', Which?, PO Box 44, Hertford X SG14 1SH. Include your initials, last name, postcode and address. Entries received by 18th June 2009 will be entered. Competition open only to current Which? members. Only one entry per household. Usual rules apply. Full rules at www.which.co.uk/bestbuycompetition.



How we test



If you're chasing the sun this summer, it's good to know that most compact digital cameras perform well in bright daylight, doing a good job of picking up colour detail and distinguishing between areas of shadow and highlight.

However, they tend to struggle more in low-light conditions. For this reason, we conduct thorough tests of each camera's low-light performance. Using a specially set up room, we test the cameras against colour and contrast charts under challenging light conditions.

The resulting photographs are then evaluated to determine the accuracy of colour reproduction and the amount of detectable image noise – the grainy speckling effect that can ruin low-light photography.

To test the effectiveness of each camera's flash, we measure how intelligently it adjusts the flash strength in varying light conditions. Flash strength, distribution and reflection are measured in carefully calibrated tests to help you choose the right camera for lighting up your evening shots.

WHICH? TEST PERFORMANCE

SCORE(%)

FLASH	VIEWFINDER/ LCD	BATTERY LIFE	EASE OF USE	FEATURES	MOVIE QUALITY	OVERALL PICTURE QUALITY	SCORE(%)
★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	78
★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	74
★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	74
★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	70
★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	70
★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	68
★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	67
★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	66
★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	66
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★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	64
★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	63
★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	63
★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	62
★★★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	60
★★★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	58
★★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	56
★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	54
★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	51
★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	48
★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★	★★★★	40

Contacts

Canon
www.canon.co.uk
020 8452 7253

Exilim (Casio)
www.exilim.co.uk
020 8452 7253

Kodak
www.kodak.co.uk
0870-2430270

Nikon
www.nikon.co.uk
0870 770 0233

Olympus
www.olympus.co.uk

020 7253 0513

Panasonic www.panasonic.co.uk
0844 844 3852

Pentax
www.pentax.co.uk
0870 736 8299

Samsung www.samsungcamera.co.uk
0870 726 7864

Sony
www.sony.co.uk
0870 511 1999