

OPTICS
TRADE

The ULTIMATE COMPACT BINOCULARS BUYING GUIDE



TOP PICKS
binoculars

INTRODUCTION

- There used to be a few manufacturers, now there are many
- The purpose of this guide is to help people choose the right compact binocular
- General features and fields of use are listed, followed by binoculars divided by price range (characteristics of binoculars from each price range are pointed out)
- Our favorite picks are listed, along with the pros and cons of each



GENERAL FEATURES

- Small, light
- Meant for daytime use
- Objective lens measures 28–36 mm
- 8x and 10x magnification are the most common
- Roof prisms of the Schmidt-Pechan type (only a few have Porro prisms)
- Not suitable for twilight use
- Not as small and compact as pocket binoculars



8X VS 10X MAGNIFICATION

8x magnification models

- ✓ Wider field of view
- ✓ Better performance in twilight because of the bigger *exit pupil
- ✓ Hand shaking less noticeable

10x magnification models

- ✓ More details can be observed

*keep in mind that compact binoculars are not designed to be used in the twilight



FIELDS OF USE

- Hiking
 - Travelling
 - Camping
 - Mountain hunting
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- ✓ A great choice for a nature enthusiast
 - ✓ Children are fond of compact binoculars because of their size
 - ✓ An excellent choice for longer treks
-
- ✗ Not for marine use
 - ✗ Only suitable for hunting during the daytime



PRICE CLASSES

- Under 100 €
- 100–300 €
- 300–500 €
- 500–1000 €
- 1000 €+

UNDER 100 €

Quality on a slightly higher level than with 42-mm objective lens binoculars priced less than 100 €

Optical performance far from excellent

We highly recommend looking in the 100–300 € range instead



100–300 €

Entry-level binoculars

a great companion for nature enthusiasts (hikers, travellers)

Characteristics of most compact binoculars priced 100–300 €:

- Plastic chassis
- Single bridge
- 2-position eyecups
- Dioptre setting on the right ocular
- Made in China, made in the Philippines
- 2-year warranty period

VORTEX DIAMONDBACK HD

- ✓ Great warranty terms
- ✓ Magnesium housing
- ✓ Great optical quality for the money
- ✓ Very compact
- ✗ Difficult to use if you wear glasses



SIGHTRON SII BLUE SKY

- ✓ Open-bridge design
- ✓ Optically the best in class
- ✓ Strap lugs recess into the barrels
- ✗ Long for a compact binocular



HAWKE ENDURANCE ED

- ✓ Magnesium housing
- ✓ Low levels of chromatic aberration
- ✓ Can be comfortably used by glasses wearers
- ✗ Image is slightly yellowish



DELTA OPTICAL ONE

- ✓ Incredibly compact
- ✓ Lightweight
- ✓ Affordable for what it offers
- ✗ Not as comfortable to use as other compact binoculars
- ✗ Build quality



NOTABLE MENTION — VORTEX RAPTOR

- ✓ 2 eyecup positions, which is a rarity among Porro prism binoculars
- ✓ Affordable
- ✓ Great warranty terms
- ✗ Build Quality
- ✗ Questionable waterproofness



300–500 €

Great for beginners as well as experienced users

For those who use binoculars regularly but aren't yet ready to spend more money

Characteristics of most compact binoculars priced 300–500 €:

- The optical quality is on a higher level than with binoculars priced 100–300 €
- Aluminium housing (fewer plastic parts)
- Single bridge
- Accessories provided are of higher quality (compared to binoculars that cost less)
- Scope of delivery is greater (compared to binoculars that cost less)
- Made in China, some made in Japan
- 3 eyecup positions
- 5-year warranty period

GPO PASSION ED

- ✓ Magnesium housing
- ✓ Available in four different colours
- ✓ Build Quality
- ✓ Elegant, Appealing design
- ✓ Affordable for what it offers
- ✗ New brand



ZEISS TERRA ED

- ✓ Optically decent; better than the 42mm version
- ✓ Field of view
- ✗ Slightly yellowish image



NIKON MONARCH 7

- ✓ A well-known brand
- ✓ Field of view
- ✓ Four positions of the eyecups
- ✓ Lightweight and short
- ✓ Close focus of 2 m
- ✗ Build quality
- ✗ Edge Sharpness



NOTABLE MENTION — STEINER SKYHAWK 4.0

- ✓ Well-armoured
- ✓ Winged eyecups (some like them, some don't)
- ✓ Sharp centre of the image
- ✓ A reputable, renowned manufacturer
- ✗ Chromatic aberration on the edges of the field of view
- ✗ Heavy and bulky



500–1000 €

This is where it starts for the European-made binoculars

Entry-level for the premium brands

Characteristics of most compact binoculars priced 500–1000 €:

- Quality materials
- Magnesium housing
- Sharp images, high in contrast & full of colours (quality glass, various lens coatings)
- Up to 4 eyecup positions
- 10-year warranty period
- Single bridge design still prevails
- Made in Japan, made in Europe
- Accessories provided are of higher quality than those provided with binoculars priced 300–500 €

ZEISS CONQUEST HD

- ✓ One of the best binoculars if you aren't willing to spend more than 1000 €.
- ✓ Field of view
- ✓ Close focus of 1.5 m
- ✓ Great optics for a price of around 900 €
- ✗ Heavy and bulky for a compact binocular
- ✗ Truncated pupils



LEICA TRINOVID HD

- ✓ Elegant, timeless design
- ✓ Build quality
- ✓ Magnesium housing
- ✓ Images rich in colours and contrast
- ✓ Close focus
- ✗ Heavy for a compact binocular
- ✗ Field of view
- ✗ Leica doesn't coat Trinovid HD's lenses with AquaDura

SWAROVSKI CL COMPANION

- ✓ Stylish
 - ✓ The lightest in this price class
 - ✓ Unique bridge design
- ✗ 2 eyecup positions



MEOPTA MEOSTAR B1

- ✓ Great warranty terms
- ✓ Build quality
- ✓ Excellent grip
- ✗ Heavy and bulky



NOTABLE MENTION — SWAROVSKI HABICHT

- ✓ High light transmission rate
- ✓ Field of view
- ✓ Vintage design
- ✗ Internal reflections
- ✗ Eyecups problematic for glasses users
- ✗ Stiff focusing wheel



1000 €+

A great choice for those who seek indisputable quality

Cream of the crop in the field of compact binoculars

Most are priced above 1500 €

Four competitors (Swarovski, Zeiss, Leica, Blaser) – first three are old hands at optics, Blaser is a newcomer

Only a few can make binoculars of such a high quality

Characteristics of most binoculars priced 1000 € and above:

- Magnesium housing
- Open-bridge or single-bridge design (compact binoculars are small, which is why most manufacturers go for the single bridge, even the high-end binoculars manufacturers)

1000 €+

- 3–4 eyecup positions
- Self-lubricating focusing mechanism
- Image is sharp in the centre and in the edges, rich in colours and high in contrast (the most exquisite coatings are used on the lenses, even on the external parts)
- Wide field of view
- Good resell value
- 10-year warranty period (at least)
- Repair is possible even after the warranty period expires
- High-quality accessories; high-quality boxes in which the binoculars are packed
- Sometimes, a limited edition is launched in this price range (great for collectors, optics admirers)

SWAROVSKI EL

- ✓ Optically great
- ✓ A flat field of view
(some don't like it)
- ✓ Open bridge construction
- ✓ A unique strap attachment system
- ✗ Too long for a compact binocular



LEICA ULTRAVID HD PLUS

- ✓ Build quality
- ✓ Optically great (image rich in colours)
- ✓ Incredibly compact
- ✓ Occasionally, a limited edition is launched under this name
- ✗ Single-bridge design



ZEISS VICTORY FL

- ✓ Optically great
- ✓ Incredibly compact
- ✗ Outdated design
- ✗ Polycarbonate housing



NOTABLE MENTION — BLASER PRIMUS

- ✓ Elegant
- ✓ Slow Focus (many hunters like it)
- ✓ The lightest in this price class
- ✗ Blaser is a newcomer in the world of optics
- ✗ Not as optically perfected as the binoculars listed above



CONCLUSION

Compact binoculars are great for avid outdoorsmen, curious for what the nature has to offer

With the help of this guide, you know what you get for a certain price

With competition in the field of binoculars getting harsher, more compact binoculars are sure to hit the market in the near future – keep your eyes peeled.