Olympus E-400 Digital SLR Double Zoom Kit - Digital Camera Review

Review Date: 29/11/06
Rating: Highly Recommended!
Buy Now: Get the Best Price

Introduction: Announced on the 14th of September 06, the Olympus E-400 is a new ultra-compact 10 megapixel digital SLR camera available with a new Zuiko Digital ED 14 - 42mm 1:3.5-5.6 and Zuiko Digital ED 40 - 150mm 1:4.0-5.6 lenses. The 14-42mm lens offers a 3x optical zoom and is 28-84mm in 35mm film equivalent terms. The Olympus E-400 is available from around £560 (body only) this makes it good value for money for a 10 megapixel digital SLR, it's also available with a kit lens for around £700 (14-42mm), and available with two kits lenses for around £750 - we will be reviewing the double zoom kit - the twin lens kit is very good value for money. The camera is enclosed in a sturdy black plastic body with rubberised hand grip. The E400 does not record movies but can take pictures at 3 frames per second. The camera is the smallest Digital SLR currently available making it an appealing DSLR for those put off by the size and bulk of normal Digital SLRs - the body measures 129.5mm (W) x 91mm (H) x 53mm (D) and weighs 380g (body only).

Olympus have this to say about the camera:

"The ultra-compact dimensions and low weight of this latest Four Thirds Standard camera in the Olympus E-System gives users the freedom to take professional quality photos wherever they wish. This model features a newly-developed 10.0 million pixel CCD for incredible imaging performance and a large 2.5"/6.4cm LCD to view results easily."

You can find more information on their website.

The Camera: a visual tour: (Photos of the camera taken with the Panasonic Lumix DMC-FZ3)

Front - Camera off, lens removed (left), and lens attached on the right. Infra-red sensor for remote, Lens release button. Wrist strap loops can be removed if required - I found these got in the way occassionally and would probably remove them if I was intending to use the camera for a long period of time.

Left - E-400 with 14 - 42mm lens - hood off, Right - E-400 with 40 - 150mm lens - hood off

Left - 14-42 lens wide - with lens hood, Right - 14-42mm lens telephoto

Left - 40 - 150 lens wide (hood on), Right - 40 - 150mm lens telephoto (hood on)

Back - 2.5" screen, Optical viewfinder with diopter correction, Playback mode, delete, menu, info, AEL/AFL, Function button (can be customised, but in custom white balance mode, holding it and taking a photo will set the custom white balance for you), 4-way controller, OK button in middle. Dual Compact flash / XD Memory card compartment. USB socket cover.

Left / Top: Flash hotshoe, Mode dial, On/Off, esposure compensation button, shutter, control dial (corner), pop-up flash and button, shooting mode. Right / Bottom - battery compartment (open/close latch), metal tripod mount.

Size Comparison: Compared to a Pentax 35mm film camera - a medium/compact sized 35mm film camera, on the left, and on the right, compared to an old Zenit B - a Russion 35mm SLR.

Size comparison - the E-400 is slightly smaller than the Zenit B in body - but the lens is bigger.

Specifications / Features:

- 10 Megapixel CCD sensor
- Ultra compact design (currently the world's smallest DSLR)
- 2.5" / 6.4cm LCD Screen, 215,000 pixels
- Dust Reduction System
- Built in Flash
- XD and Compact Flash Card Slots
- 3 frames per second shooting, with a five image RAW buffer in burst mode shooting
- 31 Exposure programmes
- ISO AUTO, 100, 125, 160, 200, 250, 320, 400, 500, 640, 800, 1000, 1250, 1600
- Shutter speeds AUTO, 8min. bulb mode, 60sec up to 1/4000th sec
- Specification state focusing down to 25cm away from front of lens is possible (with 14-42mm standard lens)
- RAW mode, Manual controls

The Double Zoom Lens Kit:

Not only do you get the 10 megapixel Olympus E-400 Digital SLR - but you also get the two new lenses especially made for the Olympus E-400 - they are 40%?? smaller than the standard kit lenses, and amazingly the 40 - 150mm lens is only slightly larger than the standard 14-42mm lens!

Twin lens in detail. On the left is the standard kit lens, a Zuiko Digital ED 14 - 42mm lens (equivalent to 28mm - 84mm in 35mm film terms) provides a 3x optical zoom lens, the second zoom lens, on the right, is the slightly larger Zuiko Digital ED 40 - 150mm lens (equivalent to 80mm - 300mm in 35mm film terms) provides a 3.8x optical zoom lens. The 4/3rds standard has a 2x magnification ratio, so a 14mm lens becomes a 28mm lens in 35mm terms.

Double Zoom Kit Box Contents:

- E-400 Camera Body
- Zuiko Digital ED 14 - 42mm 1:3.5-5.6 (inc hood)
- Zuiko Digital ED 40 - 150mm 1:4.0-5.6 (inc hood)
- Eyepieces cover
- Strap
- BLS-1 Lithium Ion Battery
- BCS-1 Battery Charger
- USB Cable

- Video Cable
- Olympus Master (Software CD-ROM)
- 25 page Basic Manual
- 164 page Advanced Manual (on CD-ROM)
- 2 Year Warranty Card

Box contents are fairly good although unfortunately the full manual is on a CD rather than being printed. There are a large range of compatible memory cards available, and a case would also be very useful. The Olympus Evolt E-400 available with two kit lenses gives you a very good zoom range and is very good value for money. There is no memory card provided with the camera.

Battery usage: Battery life seemed good, I managed to take over 350 pictures before the battery low indicator came on. Transferring images using the provided USB cable seems to drain the battery very quickly, so for best battery life it would be worth buying a memory card reader so that you don't have to rely on the USB cable connected to the camera to transfer pictures.

Menu Options / Modes: The camera mode is selected using the top dial. This allows the choice of: Auto, P, A (aperture-priority), S (shutter priority), M (Manual), Portrait, Landscape, Macro/Flower, Sport, Night Portraight, with all scene modes accessible with the dial set to "Scene", these modes are: Portrait, Landscape, Landscape and portrait, Night scene, Night Portrait, Children, Sport, High key (enhances bright areas), Low key (enhances dark areas), DIS Mode (Digital Image Stabilisation - increased the ISO setting and shutter speed to avoid image blur), Macro, Nature Macro, Candle, Sunset, Fireworks, Documents, Beach and Snow, Underwater Wide, Under Water Macro - These last two require the optional underwater housing.

Photo mode/menu: The menu button brings up the menu screen as shown below:

Photo menu 1

Photo Menu 2

Photo menu 1 options: Card setup, Custom Reset Setting, Picture mode (Vivid, Natural, Muted, Monotone, Sepia - each option allows you to change Contrast, Sharpness, and Saturation), Gradation (High key, Normal, Low key), Picture Quality (RAW+SHQ, RAW+HQ, RAW+SQ, RAW, SHQ, HQ, SQ), White Balance (Each of the following options allow the R and G to be adjusted further, and allow a white balance preview shot: Auto, Sun 5300k, Cloud 6000k, Shade 7500k, Bulb 3000k, Flourescant 1 4000k, Flourescant 2 4500k, Flourescant 3 6600k, Manual White Balance, Custom White Balance (2000 - 14000k)), ISO (Auto, 100 - 1600), Noise reduction.

Photo menu 2 options: Metering (ESP, ESP+AF, Centre-weighted, Spot, Spot-hi, Spot-sh), Flash strength (+2, -2), AF mode (S-AF, C-AF, Manual, S-AF + MF, C-AF + MF), Focus area (Auto, Left, Centre, Right), AE Bracket / Flash Bracket (3F 0.3EV, 0.7EV, 1.0EV).

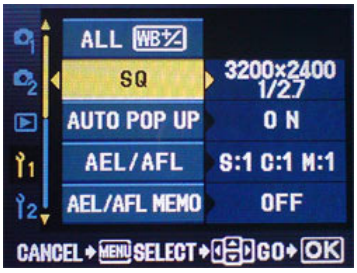
This menu seems to be lacking options when compared to the Olympus EVOLT E-500, however, it appears as thought the majority of other options (shooting mode, exposure compensation) are now directly accessed through the external buttons, rather than being in the menu, or alternatively using the "Photo mode info display" shown below - pressing the OK button turns this into a menu where you can quickly get access to the most commonly used features and options.


Optical viewfinder

Photo mode info display

Screen / LCD display in photo mode: (shown above, right) The screen resolution with 215,000 pixels is very good, and can display a histogram after each shot. The screen is clear and the text and menus are easy to read. In the display is - shutter speed, f setting, mode (manual/auto/shutter priority/aperture priority), date, number of shots remaining. You can also press OK, and use the 4-way controller and change the options on the screen such as: ISO, White Balance, Colour mode, Flash - auto, red-eye, flash on, no flash, red-eye slow, flash slow, flash slow 2, full, 1/4, 1/16, 1/64 (there's also a pop up flash button on top of the camera), Metering, Focus area, Focus mode - single, continuous, manual, single with manual, continuous with manual, Shooting mode, CF/XD, Picture quality - SHQ, HQ (adjustable compression), SQ (adjustable size and compression). Further options become available by pressing the INFO button as shown above right.

Optical Viewfinder (pictured above, left): has a diopter corrector. There is no electronic viewfinder. The optical viewfinder shows additional information to the right, such as aperture, shutter, focus, flash, mode, white balance etc.



Setup Menu 1

Setup Menu 2

Set-up menu 1 options: ALL White Balance +- allows you to change Red / Green + or -, SQ - set SQ image size and compression ratio, Auto flash pop-up, AEL / AFL setup, AEL / AFL memo (on/off), AEL Metering, Function button customisation (One touch WB, Test Picture without saving, Depth of field preview, Off), Sound (on, off), Dial customisation (can be set to change last two dial options (sport, night portrait) to underwater scene modes for use with the optional underwater housing).

Set-up menu 2 options: Date / Time settings, CF/XD, File name, Screen brightness (+/- 7), Language, Video out, Record view, Sleep, USB mode (Auto, Storage, Control, Easy print, Custom print), Colour space (sRGB, AdobeRGB), Pixel mapping, Cleaning mode, Firmware version.

Playback (Review) mode/menu: The menu button brings up the menu screen as shown on the right, below:

Playback mode (some of the screens)

Playback menu

Playback mode: Scrolling through the photos is fairly quick. The zoom is very quick and allows you to zoom upto 14x. There were numerous different playback views: Calendar view by date, Normal - with the option of additional info, histogram, highlight, and shadow view, thumbs - showing 4, 9, 16, or 25 thumbnails. Pressing the INFO button allows you to go through these different view modes.

Playback menu options: Playback view (choice of thumbnails per page), Auto-rotate (on,off), Edit (allows you to convert image to black and white, sepia, fix red-eye, change saturation, and resize), print, copy all (XD - CF and vice versa).

Picture Size / Quality: The camera takes the following size pictures:

Mode name	Compression Ratios	Image Dimensions	Image Size (mb)
RAW (ORF)	Uncompressed	3648 x 2736	22
SHQ	1/2.7	3648 x 2736	7.9
HQ	1/8	3648 x 2736	3.0
SQ	1/2.7-1/12	3200 x 2400	6.2, 4.4, 2.4, 1.8
	1/2.7-1/12	2560 x 1920	3.7, 2.5, 1.3, 0.8
	1/2.7-1/12	1600 x 1200	1.5, 1.0, 0.5, 0.4
	1/2.7-1/12	1280 x 960	0.9, 0.6, 0.3, 0.2
	1/2.7-1/12	1024 x 768	0.6, 0.4, 0.2, 0.2
	1/2.7-1/12	640 x 480	0.3, 0.2, 0.1, 0.1
(SHQ/HQ/SQ) + RAW	none	3648 x 2736	(7.9/3.0/4.8) + 22

As shown in the table above, higher quality images take a large amount of memory, so a high capacity memory card is definitely recommended, unless you're prepared to sacrifice image size or use higher compression options to fit more pictures in memory. There is a very good choice of image sizes and compression options (although unfortunately no choice regarding aspect ratio), and inclusion of RAW image mode means you can ensure no image quality is lost before any further editing occurs.

A large memory card is relatively cheap, and highly recommended, I would recommend at a bare minimum a 512mb memory card, if you intend to take JPEG images, and preferably a 1024mb memory card, or larger, especially if you intend to take RAW images. The larger the memory card, the more photos you will be able to take. If you are likely to go on holiday then the largest memory card you can afford would definitely be worth investing in, as you don't always know when you will next be at a computer. You can use Compact Flash, Micro drive and xD picture cards (you can keep 1 Compact Flash card, and 1 XD memory card in the camera at the same time and switch between them whenever you feel like it, for example, if one is full). As the Olympus supports FAT32, it is compatible with the Hitachi 4gb Micro Drive (£89). Listed below are links to memory cards that will work with the Olympus E-400:

Find the latest prices for CF (Compact Flash) memory cards at Amazon.co.uk: 512mb: £20, 1gb (1024mb): £24, 2gb (2048mb): £45, 4gb (4096mb): £87, 8gb (8192mb): £198.
Need more help deciding what size memory card to buy? Click here to read my article called "What Size Memory Card Should I Buy?"

Speed: The camera is very quick to switch on and take photos, being ready in just under 2 seconds. Focusing seemed fairly quick, except in very low light when the flash-assist is used - this can seem to take a long time to focus depending on the subject. The playback mode is also fairly quick. The camera shutter response seemed instant when pre-focused - and shot to shot time was quick, with a delay of around 1/3rd second between shots without flash. The flash recharge time was very quick and can be used in continuous shooting mode taking a photo every 0.4 seconds (roughly 2.5fps). The cameras menus seemed quick. Continuous shooting is very quick, at roughly 3fps for multiple shots at the highest resolution, dependant on card technology used - with compact flash 5 shots could be taken sequentially at maximum resolution (RAW/SHQ) before there is a delay while the files were written to the memory card. Using HQ JPEG, 9 shots can be taken at 3fps before there is a delay.

Ease of use: The camera is very easy to use, especially in the AUTO mode and the scene modes, even though the camera has a lot of options. The controls on the back of the camera are quite straightforward - the menus are responsive and easy to read and navigate. The menus are also easy to use, and the options are big enough and easy enough to see clearly. The modes are easy to access, quick and simple, mainly thanks to the large screen (most options are easily accessible by use of the ok button and the direction arrows) which makes it easier to use. It is useful to read the advanced manual to help familiarise yourself with some of the more technical features of the camera eg; knowing that sf and cf mean single focus and constant focus was useful. As with nearly all Digital SLRs: to get the most out of the camera you may want to use RAW, this adds an additional step to the image taking process, meaning that you have to convert the images to JPEG before you can email them to friends or use them in other programs; You may also need to learn how to use custom white balance, and the preset white balance modes to get the best colour from the camera. So whilst the Olympus E-400 is very easy to use in AUTO mode, (simply point and shoot), to get the most out of the camera may take some time.

Ergonomics and Buttons: (Feel, placement, labels, etc.) The buttons are easy to use, and they are in a good position. There seem to be a lot of buttons but this allows easy access to the essential functions and features while you're composing your shot. The buttons feel okay, although some may find them small. The shutter release is good. The scrolling wheel has multiple functions and in play mode is used to zoom in on your picture so you compare magnified sections of one image with the previous or next, making it simple to decide which shot is the one with least camera shake. I thought the camera felt good ergonomically, despite the cameras lack of handgrip compared to other Olympus DSLRs, the small body is easy to hold, and has good sized rubber grips at the front and back. The only problem I had with the camera was the placement of the strap loops, making it slightly uncomfortable for my right hand, thankfully these can be removed. The camera feels like a solid, robust and well built camera.

Image Quality: Here are some real world sample photos taken in various settings, such as Inside, Noise, Outside, Zoom, Macro, to demonstrate the quality of pictures taken and also show different features of the camera. **Larger versions of these photos, plus more photos are available in the Olympus EVOLT E-400 Sample Photo Gallery!**

Inside:


Heather and Flower (ISO100) RAW - JPG Baby Waller and Grandparents (ISO100)

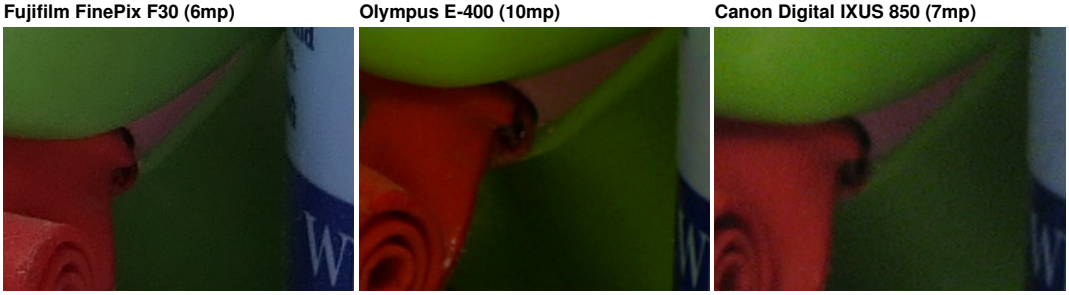
Inside: The camera has very good colour - It took a good "Heather and Flower" photo - there is no red-eye in the photo. It has a very good flash, and copes well with group photos, and on AUTO ISO, the ISO setting was kept quite low in these photos. The camera did a good job at focusing even in low-light. Colour is richly saturated and can be altered, Program default to VIVID colour, whereas AUTO (with firmware 1.1) defaults to Natural colour. Flash photos were occassionally slightly under-exposed. It is worth noting that JPEG images did come out slightly softer, and with slightly less saturation - I have included a JPG and a RAW converted to a JPEG (using default settings) in the gallery to show the difference.

Noise: Noise is generally a bad thing - it removes detail, and gives a grainy effect over the image. With digital cameras noise can be a real problem as digital camera noise is often made out of blue, red or green dots. As the ISO setting increases, pictures tend to have more noise. Noise is most noticeable in dark areas of photos. The camera has an Automatic mode for ISO levels, and manual ISO settings (ISO: 100, 125, 160, 200, 250, 320, 400, 500, 640, 800, 1000, 1250, 1600).

Below you'll find the noise test image, plus actual pixel crops from the image taken at different ISO settings, compared with the 6 megapixel, Fujifilm FinePix F30, which is currently the benchmark compact camera for noise tests due to it's excellent high ISO performance, and a 7 megapixel Canon Digital IXUS 850 IS in order to show the difference between an Olympus Digital SLR and a current 7 megapixel point and shoot digital camera.

ISO Noise Test Photos - Flash is off. Fujifilm FinePix F30 on the left, Olympus E-400 in the middle, Canon Digital IXUS 850 IS on the right. The colour difference is due to automatic white balance.

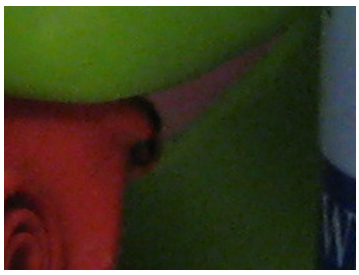
Fujifilm FinePix F30 (6mp) **Olympus E-400 (10mp)** **Canon Digital IXUS 850 (7mp)**



ISO100 - Actual Pixels

ISO100 - Actual Pixels

ISO100 - Actual Pixels



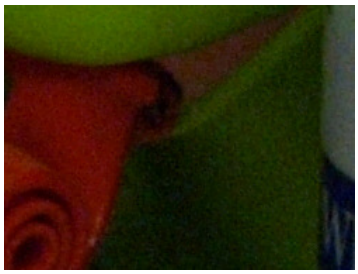
ISO200 - Actual Pixels

ISO200 - Actual Pixels

ISO200 - Actual Pixels

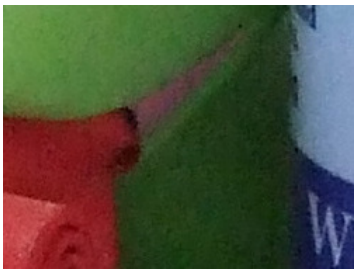
ISO400 - Actual Pixels

ISO400 - Actual Pixels

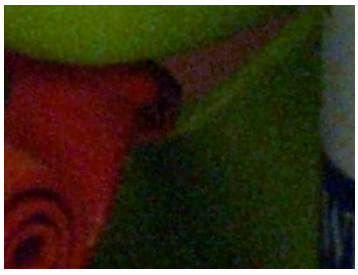


ISO400 - Actual Pixels

ISO800 - Actual Pixels



ISO800 - Actual Pixels



ISO800 - Actual Pixels

ISO1600 - Actual Pixels

ISO1600 - Actual Pixels

ISO1600 - Actual Pixels

Due to the physically larger size of the imaging (CCD) sensor in the Olympus E-400 you would expect noise to be less noticable when compared to compact point and shoot digital cameras, as they have much smaller imaging (CCD) sensors, which typically results in much higher noise. However, the Fujifilm FinePix F30 is in a league of it's own compared to other compact point and shoot digital cameras, giving even the Olympus E-400 a "run for it's money" with extremely low noise, even upto ISO1600 (the Fujifilm FinePix F30 goes upto ISO3200, but this isn't shown here). Compared to a more normal point and shoot digital camera, the Canon Digital IXUS 850 IS, the Olympus E-400 shows less noise and much cleaner edges at all ISO settings. The E-400 has low noise at ISO100 - ISO400, with ISO800 and above being the only ISO settings that show a large amount of noise. I would say that ISO800 is usable, and ISO settings above should still produce acceptable results as there appears to be no loss of colour. Overall these results go to show that compact point and shoot digital cameras continue to try and close the gap between them and Digital SLRs. The Olympus E-400 has an option to switch noise-reduction on and off, however, this is only activated during long exposures, and is only available in certain modes (Auto, and all Scene modes excluding Children, Sport, and Beach and Snow).

Outside:

Liverpool Shops

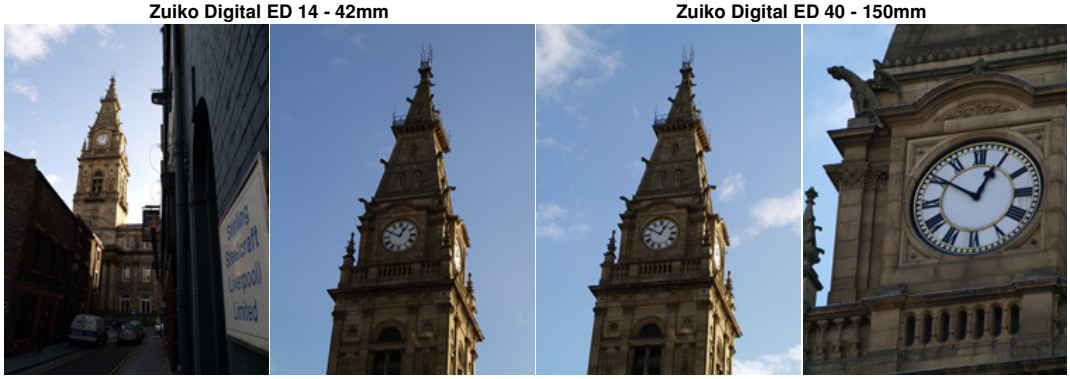
Liverpool, Yellow Super Lamb Banana

Outside, the camera has rich saturated (and accurate) colours, with good saturation, contrast and detail. There was good detail although some images seemed a little soft (as with most Digital SLRs) - more detail can be extracted from images by using RAW, and then sharpening the images. Noise seemed low for ISO100 photos. I turned up the quality to maximum to avoid jpeg artefacts.

Zoom (and lenses): The double zoom kit provides a very good range of optical zoom power. The first lens provides a 3x optical zoom starting at wide-angle

(28mm equivalent), and the second lens provides ultra zoom levels of optical zoom - combining the two gives you 28mm - 300mm of range (in 35mm terms), which is effectively the same as having a 10.7x optical zoom lens. If you don't need all this zoom power, then simply go for the single lens kit as it is great for 'normal' everyday photography, but if you want a camera suitable for every situation from wide-angle use to ultra zoom use, then the double zoom kit is definitely worth going for. However, you might be interested in obtaining different lenses depending on your field of work (for example, a 18mm - 180mm all in one lens may be more convenient, as this is the equivalent to 36 - 360mm). For telephoto work the purchase of a tripod will also help you make the most of your investment.

Zuiko Digital ED 14 - 42mm **Zuiko Digital ED 40 - 150mm**



14mm (35mm equivalent: 28mm) Wide | 42mm (35mm equivalent: 84mm) Telephoto | 40mm (35mm equivalent: 80mm) Wide | 150mm (35mm equivalent: 300mm) Telephoto

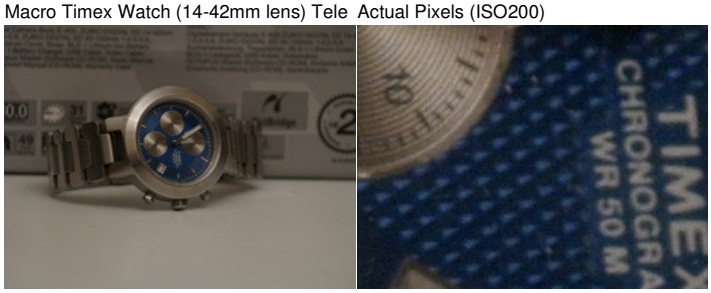
Exposure / Metering on the photos of the clock tower seems very good, with the dark areas of the photo not too dark, and the bright areas of the photo still visible. Image quality here is very good with excellent detail, no vignetting or corner softness, and minimal chromatic aberrations.

Lens noise and zoom: The lens is very quiet, making almost no noise when switched on due to the lens already being in position. The manual zoom ring also means that zooming is silent and it gives you very good control of how you frame your subject. Like all SLR's the shutter noise is distinctive and provides some indication of the shutter speed. On the E-400 it does seem quite loud, and if you're used to the silence of a compact point and shoot digital camera, then you may notice the shutter sound is considerably louder than your point and shoot camera.

Other Image Quality issues: Purple fringing can be seen in some extreme test cases near the edges of the photos, however this was only seen when looking closely at the images, and was not seen in the majority of photos. Some purple fringing can be seen in the telephoto clock tower photo taken with the 40-150mm lens.

Macro Lens Performance:

Macro Timex Watch (14-42mm lens) Tele | Actual Pixels (ISO200)



Macro Timex Watch (40-150mm lens) Tele | Actual Pixels (ISO200)

Using the lens set to telephoto zoom, you are able to get a better macro photo - colour and detail is good, and there appears to be fairly low noise at ISO200. The lens / autofocus allows you to get roughly ~10cm away from the subject to the front of the lens using the 14-42mm kit lens, and roughly ~60cm away from the subject to the front of the lens using the 40-150mm lens. Setting the white balance manually helps acheive better results, and even better results will be possible with a dedicated macro lens. Using the 40-150mm lens in full optical zoom as a macro lens requires a good level of light to be on the subject, so that a faster shutter speed can be used in order to avoid image blur.

Conclusion

Image Quality: Image quality is very good to excellent, the images have excellent colour, with good saturation, contrast and detail, with low noise except for high iso images. Images were slightly soft straight from the camera and could benefit from sharpening - for maximum detail and colour control RAW images should be taken. Purple fringing was very low, as was red-eye. The camera did a good job focusing even in low light thanks to the flash assist. I did not notice vignetting in photos, nor did I notice barrel or pincushion distortion. There is a very good range of image sizes, and a good choice of compression options (including RAW). Auto white balance and metering seemed to be good. The camera gives very good control over image quality - selecting different picture modes allows allows you to change the colour mode (Vivid, Natural etc), saturation, contrast and sharpness. (9/10)

Everything else (the camera as a whole): The camera is the most compact Digital SLR available, although still not pocketable. The camera is stylish with a black body with black rubber hand grips. The camera has a very good 2.5" screen and the optical viewfinder

can be used in bright sunlight. The camera feels very well built, and is comfortable to hold. The camera is easy to use, the menu system is easy to use and there is a good layout of buttons and controls, with the majority on the outside of the camera giving quick access to the most commonly used options and features (rather than hidden in menus), and the most commonly used features are quickly accessible using the OK button and back screen. The camera speed is very good, with a good switch on time, quick focusing time, excellent shutter response, excellent flash recharge time, fairly quick playback mode, quick menus, and excellent continuous shooting (with or without flash). The camera has a large range of features, such as anti-dust / supersonic wave filter, one-touch custom white balance, and offers a great deal of options to customise your images. (9/10)

Value for Money: The Olympus E-400 is good value for money in a competitive market (available for around £560 body only) offering a lot of features considering the "Budget DSLR" price - value for money is increased further with the option of two excellent kit lenses reviewed here, available for around £750, the camera doesn't cost much more than the 8 megapixel Olympus E-500. Alternative 10 megapixel Digital SLRs worth considering include the Sony Alpha A100-DSLR (with anti-shake sensor, £735 with 2 lenses), Pentax K10D (with anti-shake sensor, £660 with 1 lens), Nikon D80 (£779 with 1 lens), and Canon EOS 400D (£689 with 2 lenses) (9/10) **See more digital camera reviews sorted by megapixels here.**

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED! DIGICAMREVIEW

Summary: The Olympus E-400 is an impressive digital SLR camera, offering excellent image quality, and an excellent range of lenses with very precise manual zoom control. The screen is good, and the camera can produce excellent photos. If you can stick with the lower ISO settings and you want high quality large images then this camera should be high on your shopping list. This camera is easy to use (in auto mode) and offers speedy performance, excellent battery life, with good controls and excellent build quality. I would recommend this camera especially to people who want greater creative control that normal compact digital cameras generally do not provide. I'd recommend trying out the camera and comparing with other brands before purchase, as you may find looking through the viewfinder and getting used to reading the information provided takes a little time, when compared to your average (electronic viewfinder) digital camera. If you have been put off getting a Digital SLR due to the physical size of them compared to point and shoot cameras, then the E-400 could be what you've been waiting for, as one of the smallest, it is also one of the easiest Digital SLRs to take with you. The double zoom lens kit with new smaller lenses, designed specifically for the E-400, offers excellent value for money and a very appealling package. Highly Recommended!

Olympus E-400 Rating: Highly Recommended! (9/10)
Get the best price below!

What I like:

- Stylish Ultra compact "retro" styled Digital SLR body (World's smallest)
- Matching compact lenses
- Very good image quality
- Excellent colour
- Simple to use, thanks to AUTO and Scene modes (although practice is recommended)
- Very good kit lenses and package options, Double Zoom Kit excellent value for money.
- Wide-angle / telephoto lenses available, note also with an adapter can use other Olympus OM kit
- Quick performance, excellent 3fps continuous shooting, 2.5fps with flash on
- Well built, strong black SLR body
- Useful image review mode, including histograms and overexposed + underexposed highlighting
- Good range of image sizes, and image compression which includes RAW (12 bit)
- Anti-dust feature
- One-Touch Custom White Balance (accessible through customising Function button)
- Very good value for money (especially with double zoom kit)
- Good macro performance from the 14-42mm kit lens
- Good battery life

What I don't like:

- Manual focus is difficult (small optical viewfinder), electronically controlled focusing ring
- Advanced manual is on CD
- USB1.1 (not 2.0) - makes transferring images slow unless you use a USB2 card reader.
- Olympus Master software slightly "quirky" / annoying at times - defaults to creating a new folder with the current date, in a strange location on your PC, no matter how many times you tell it not to!
- Auto White Balance seems poor indoors compared to point and shoot digital cameras. Custom white balance or one of the preset modes helps solve this problem.
- No 3:2 aspect ratio option (4:3 only)
- No ISO3200 mode
- Limited availability (Europe and Asia so far?)

Additional Test Images - viewable in the Olympus EVOLT E400 Sample Photo Gallery
Tested with E-400 Body Firmware 1.0 and 1.1. Lens Firmware 1.0.