

Benro TMA28C Tripod and B1 Ballhead Review Update After Three Months Intensive Use



Above and Beyond.....Benro TMA28C Tripod and B1 Ballhead high in the Cuillin last week.



The panorama I took looking the other way. A stitch of 5 shots so a steady tripod was essential

Benro introduced my review on their Facebook page by saying “We believe in our tripods and heads...that’s why we don’t mind sending impartial photographers our products to review in harsh conditions...A big thank you to Adrian Trendall who really put our kit to the test in his TMA28C Tripod and B1 ball head review.”

Having used the tripod for just over three months, I thought I’d do a follow up to my earlier review. Apart from a two week period over Christmas when I was away visiting friends and relatives, I reckon I have used the tripod at least 5 days a week so it’s probably had well over 60 days of use. Now 60 days may not sound like a lot but some of those days have been pretty long with a 3 hour walk/climb in the dark to be on a summit for sunrise. Then I might be out all day walking and climbing, take in the sunset and descend in the dark.

The Cuillin is a very testing environment with savagely sharp gabbro rock, lots of scree and loose rock. Then there is the battering from mega high winds, rain and snow. Add in salt water in coastal locations and you have an absolute torture test for gear. If it survives in the Cuillin then it should be good anywhere.



The TMA28C Tripod and B1 Ballhead have been thoroughly put through their paces and come through with flying colours. The best thing I can say about them is that they have become indispensable tools and like good tools their use has become intuitive. Everything works slickly and does exactly what's asked of it. With use, muscle memory

learns and I can rapidly remove the tripod from it's location on the side of my rucksack and intuitively set it up possibly whilst balancing on a steep slope or cliff edge. I love the twistlocks on the legs and the tripod is a joy to set up. The light can change rapidly in the mountains and it's essential that all my gear is easy to use and quick to set up and the Benro certainly meets these criteria.



The Cuillin at dawn. The vivid colours are known as The Belt of Venus or an antitwilight arch, an atmospheric phenomena visible shortly before sunrise or after sunset

The above photo summarises why I need dependable gear that is easy to use. To be in place pre sunrise, I had to walk and climb for two and a half hours in the dark using crampons and ice axes, the way lit only by the stars and my head torch. Then in winds approaching 65 miles per hour I had to set up camera and tripod wearing gloves to try and keep my fingers warm since with the windchill factored in the temperature must have been about minus 20. The wind was so strong at times that I literally couldn't stand up and had to shelter behind rocks.



Another shot where I had to climb for 3 hours to be in place for sunrise

I can't really comment too much on the long term durability having only used it for 3 months but they have been pretty intense and I can't see any obvious problems or even any real sign of wear and tear. It is a new toy and as such I have probably mollycoddled it a bit more than usual; but the only extra protection has been the thin blue dust bag which I have used to keep it in on the outside of my rucksack to give a little protection from scratches etc. If I've used the tripod in the sea then I've washed it off with fresh water. Apart from this, I just use the tripod and replace it

in it's padded case when I get home. There's a few minor scratches as you'd expect but the tripod still works like new.

What I really like;

- The tripod and head do what they are designed to do, hold the camera and lens steady even in very windy, adverse conditions
- Intuitive to set up in dark etc
- Foam on leg not only warmer to hold in the cold but bigger diameter and easier to pick up when wearing gloves.
- Ball head is very smooth and all movements very fluid. Very sturdy especially for size and weight.
- Other manufacturers possibly use them, but new to me was the safety lock on the tripod head which means a quick release has to be pulled to release the camera/tripod plate/L bracket etc. Very easy to use and a great addition to prevent expensive camera gear accidentally falling off. I like it a lot and have become so used to using it that when I have used clients' tripods which don't have this feature then I still instinctively go through the motions of releasing it.
- Dust/dirt resistant collars on legs to prevent ingress of dirt etc. I like these a lot. Also the rubber twist locks are nice and chunky and easily operated when wearing gloves.

- Cost/performance ratio. Benro tripods are very similar to the Gitzo range with which I am very familiar. Gitzo seem to be recognised as perhaps the premier tripod producer but this does come at a cost and typically a similar Benro product probably costs half or less than it's Gitzo equivalent. I know that to a certain extent you do get what you pay for but in this case I can't help but think a large part of what you are paying for is the name rather than any quantum leap in quality.



The Fairy Pools are even more magical when the mountains have a dusting of the white stuff. Long exposures like this obviously need a steady tripod.



Another long exposure, this time of the ever popular Elgol looking towards a snow capped Cuillin

The tripod has become like a well loved tool that does all that is demanded of it, in a business like and efficient manner and you cannot really ask for better than that. As to negative points, well I'm really having to wrack my brain to think of any. Obviously it would be great if the tripod could weigh next to nothing, pack down to the size of a match box yet be as stable as a steel girder but even Benro designers are constrained by the laws of physics and the tripod produces an excellent compromise between weight, bulk and stability.

The only minor fault is that when wearing gloves it can be awkward to use the hook at the base of the centre column which needs to be pulled down so as to hang a rucksack etc on to act as ballast. In the dark, with a strong wind howling around and wearing gloves I have struggled to grasp the sprung loaded hook. To make things easier, I have simply tied a thin piece of cord to it which can easily be grasped by cold fingers encased in gloves. Job done and the tripod is perfect for my needs.

In my initial review I mentioned the short column but haven't actually used it due to the lack of hook to hang a bag from. In fact, a number of times I have been glad of the longer central column and the ability to gain a little bit of height. The other thing I mentioned was the option to use either spikes or rubber feet. Well, in the snowy, winter conditions I have opted to just use the rubber feet and things worked fine although a couple of times I have had to trample down the snow to create a firm base. I still hope Benro listen to feedback and come up with a design that incorporates spikes which can retract through the rubber feet.

Benro certainly listens to feedback and I am pleased they have just announced a geared head. The Benro GD3WH Geared Head could well be the holy grail for landscapers with it's precise adjustment in 3 separate axes and best of all it is Arca (the industry standard) compatible rather than using generic fittings favoured by some tripod companies.

Perhaps even more interesting is that Benro UK have introduced a range of filters which look to be premium products and include not only graduated neutral density filters but also reverse grads. Exciting stuff.



