

SPOTTING SCOPES

VORTEX RAZOR HD 13-39x56

£1,109

David Chandler



For a compact scope, it still produces a very good image

This new offering from Vortex is part of their top-end, Razor HD range. I reviewed the angled version, but the straight version has the same RRP.

Quality

This scope came in quality packaging with some good accessories – a stay-on-case and a PhoneSkoPe digiscoping adapter (RRP £26). The scope itself looks and feels very well made – it feels like a quality item. It is small (264mm long) and light, weighing just 812g.

The eyepiece is removable – your first task is to screw it on. I found this a bit fiddly –

getting the locating pin in the right place is key. But once it's on, it's on, and you probably won't be doing this very often, unless you choose to remove it for more packing versatility when travelling. I found the stay-on-case fiddly to get on, too – but again, you're unlikely to be doing that very often.

This scope is armoured, waterproof, dust-proof and Argon-filled. The exterior lens surfaces are protected by ArmorTek, which resists scratches and helps to protect your investment from muck and fingerprints. It doesn't have a lens hood or a rotating collar.

Its low light performance certainly impressed – remember, this scope has a small objective lens. On a fairly bright day, a perched, distant Buzzard at 39x was crisp and bright 20 minutes before sunset, and still showing some plumage details 17 minutes after sunset. Six minutes later, at 13x, the Razor HD helped with some distant Short-eared Owl ID.

On the tripod

With an Arca-Swiss tripod foot, this little Razor can be mounted directly onto any tripod with an Arca-Swiss head – that means you don't have to screw it onto the head or a QR plate. If you are screwing it on, there's a hole for an anti-rotation pin, to stop inadvertent twisting.

I stuck it on my old Slik and took it to some birds. This Razor is well balanced; neither front nor back heavy, and image quality is excellent. I'd say the colours are at the cool end of the spectrum, and can appear almost clinically clean. The view is crisp, bright and with excellent resolution throughout the zoom range.

That's quite something. It's not as bright at higher magnifications of course, but its 39x performance is impressive – it resolved the speckling on the breast of a male Teal c.80 metres away very well.

I did see some peripheral softness – for whatever reason, this was most noticeable at low magnification. But I wouldn't say that it was a problem. Close-focus is excellent. In theory, it's 2.8m; I measured it at slightly more than 2.5m. Not many scopes can do that. For most of my time with this scope I didn't witness any colour-fringing, but did see a bit adorning some Brent Geese at Titchwell. I also saw some eyepiece flare when light 'got in' in front of my eye – but this is not unusual and, again, I wouldn't say it's a particular concern.

The view did not feel narrow, and felt wider at 39x than at 13x. That is to be expected – the real field of view (fov) isn't wider at 39x but the apparent field of view (how wide it feels) is. To calculate apparent fov, multiply actual fov by the magnification.

SPECS

- Field of view (°/m@1,000m): 3.2-1.7/55.8-29.7
- Close focus: 2.8m (quoted)
- Eye relief: 15-17.8mm
- Weight: 812g
- Length: 264mm
- RRP: £1,109
- Guarantee: Unlimited lifetime warranty
- Web: newprouk.co.uk

VERDICT

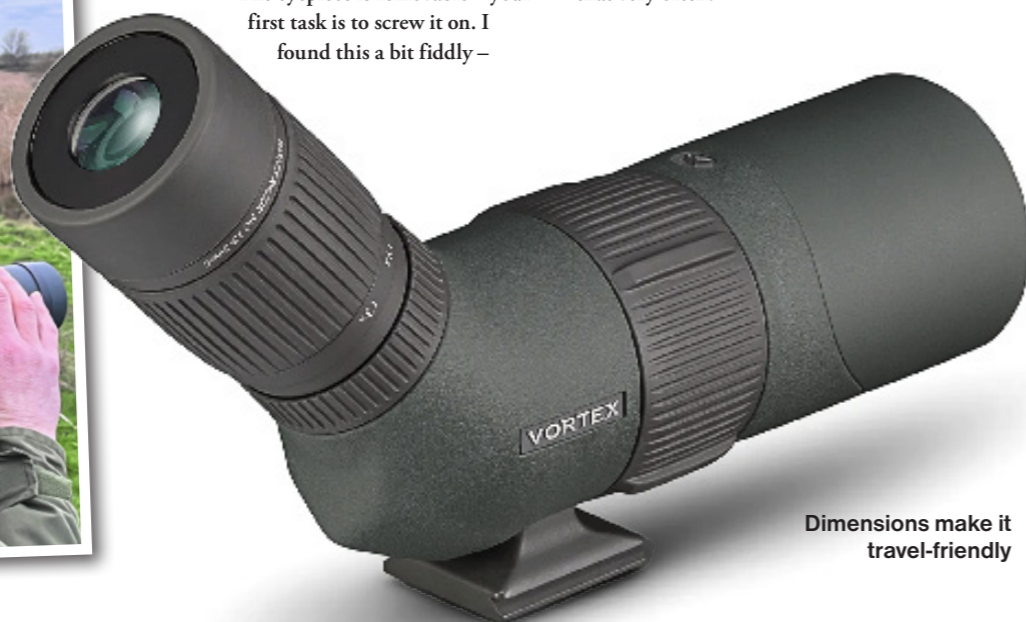
Overall, I am very impressed with this scope. It is small and light, well made, and can deliver an impressive view right through the zoom range. It's not a small investment but then it's also not the most expensive small scope out there. If the budget fits, and you're after a small, light scope this should be on your shortlist.

- OPTICS ★★★★★
- HANDLING ★★★★★
- PRICE ★★★★★
- OVERALL ★★★★★

Mechanics

Focus precision is very good. The focusing ring wraps around the barrel (helical focusing), is 39mm wide and moves very smoothly, and stiffly, anti-clockwise towards that distant Buzzard, through just over one revolution. I think the stiff movement helps with focus precision. Mechanics and grip on the zoom eyepiece are very good. This, too, has plenty of resistance. The twist-up eyecup has one intermediate position. It moves well but I would have liked the movement on this to be a little stiffer.

The package includes a removable, tethered objective cover – which isn't good (or necessary) if you are using the stay-on-case. There is also a tethered eyepiece cover. I'd have liked the tether on this to be longer – to make it easier to put the cover on with the eyepiece up.



Dimensions make it travel-friendly