



APS-C Canon EF Nikon F Pentax K Sigma SA Sony A



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Sigma 18-200mm f/3.5-6.3 DC Macro OS HSM | C £270 / \$410

A mere slip of a thing

Sacrificing a little in telephoto reach can pay dividends when you want to travel light. At 430g and 71 x 86mm, this lens is only about two-thirds of the weight of most 18-300mm APS-C format lenses. An exercise in downsizing, it's also 180g lighter and 14mm shorter than the first edition of Sigma's optically stabilised 18-200mm.

Part of this reduction is due to the introduction of double-sided aspherical lens elements and a downsized autofocus motor, while a new TSC (Thermally Stable Composite) material used in the lens barrels also plays a part. However, autofocus lacks full-time manual override, and the focus ring rotates while autofocusing. As the lens is quite compact, you need to be careful to keep your fingers clear of the focus ring when using autofocus.

The maximum telephoto reach is equivalent to a focal length of 300mm on Nikon, Pentax and Sony bodies, and 320mm on Canon cameras. That stacks up well against the MFT lenses in the group, which give an effective reach of between 280mm and 300mm.

PERFORMANCE

Helped by the inclusion of four SLD (Special Low Dispersion) elements, colour fringing is well controlled, beating most other APS-C format lenses. The optical stabiliser is pretty efficient as well, giving a benefit of about three-stops (Canon and Nikon fit versions). Sharpness is above average at the telephoto end and consistent through the whole zoom range.



Tech focus...
16 elements in 13 groups; seven diaphragm blades; closest focus distance, 39cm; 62mm filter thread; ultrasonic (motor) autofocus; 71 x 86mm; 430g.

Digital Camera

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OVERALL

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Sigma 18-300mm f/3.5-6.3 DC Macro OS HSM | C £400 / \$610

A step up in size and quality

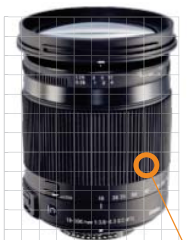
Compared with Sigma's 18-200mm lens that's also on test, this one is relatively big and heavy, at 79 x 102mm and 585g. Similar features include motor-driven rather than ring-type ultrasonic autofocus, with the same weaknesses of focus ring rotation during autofocus and the lack of full-time manual override.

Both lenses feature a focus distance scale printed on the focus ring, and a macro scale printed on the inner barrel which extends at longer zoom settings. The maximum macro magnification ratio is 0.33x but you can boost this to 0.5x by buying Sigma's optional close-up filter, developed exclusively for this lens. Neither of the Sigma lenses has a weather-sealed mount.

While the Sigma 18-200mm features four SLD elements, the 18-300mm upgrades to four top-quality FLD (Fluorite-level Low Dispersion) elements as well as one SLD element. A newer optical stabiliser (Canon and Nikon fit only) is also more efficient, with performance that's closer to four stops than three.

PERFORMANCE

Our tests reveal the new Sigma 18-300mm to be the sharpest lens here at wide-angle to mid-zoom settings, and it remains sharper than the competition at longer focal lengths between 150mm and 300mm (where available in other lenses). Colour fringing is well contained and distortions are less noticeable than in the Canon, Nikon and Tamron APS-C class lenses.



Tech focus...
17 elements in 13 groups; seven diaphragm blades; closest focus distance, 39cm; 72mm filter thread; ultrasonic (motor) autofocus; 79 x 102mm; 585g.

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