

First test

PRICE: **£499.99**

VANGUARDWORLD.CO.UK

Vanguard Alta Pro 3VRL 303CV18

Many photographers now work in multimedia, so the need for a versatile tripod is greater than ever. Vanguard's latest sticks could be just the ticket for all of your imaging needs

TESTED BY
WILL CHEUNG

VANGUARD'S ALTA PRO 3VRL 303CV18 is aimed at the semi-pro and pro shooter who demands a high level of performance in addition to smart handling and versatility. The three-section, carbon-fibre tripod has a maximum load rating of 25kg and uses a removable levelling base rather than a centre column. This set of legs comes with a VEO PV-18 video head mounted in a levelling bowl.

Locked and unlocked using the rubber-coated twist grip below the head, it's easy to level the camera or spotting scope. The base can be rotated 360° and adjusted +/-15°, which means if the initial tripod set-up is not perfectly level, the camera can easily be moved and locked into position using one hand.

Undo two locks and the levelling base can quickly be swapped for another head. The Alta Pro 3VRL Platform 30, a lightweight non-levelling base which normally costs £29.99, is included in this outfit. If you already own a tripod head, fit it onto this mounting plate for an easy-to-switch two-head support system. If you need a ball head, Vanguard has a range including the VEO BH-250S we tried here, which sells for £139.99.

The Alta Pro 3VRL 303CV18's folded length with no head attached measures 74cm from the feet to the head platform. >>



GET A GRIP Levelling the tripod head is a cinch: simply loosen the twist-grip lock and adjust, using the two bubble levels on the VEO PV-18 to help



HIGH HOPES Fully extended with the PV-18 head, the camera platform is an awesome 180cm from the ground

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SPECS

Alta Pro 3VRL 303CV18

- › Price £499.99
- › In the box Alta Pro 3VRL 303CV18 legs, VEO PV-18 video head with two extension arms, quick-release plate, Alta Pro 3VRL Platform 30, 3mm hex key, 4mm hex key and tripod bag
- › Leg material Carbon fibre
- › Leg sections Three
- › Leg angles Three (23°, 50°, 80°)
- › Leg locks Easy-clean twist grips
- › Folded length 86.5cm
- › Maximum height 180.5cm
- › Minimum height 28.5cm
- › Max load capacity (legs) 25kg
- › Feet type Retractable rubber and spiked
- › Weight 3260g with removable level and head

VEO PV-18 video head

- › Price (when bought separately) £159.99
- › Max load capacity 15kg
- › Arca-Swiss compatible Yes
- › Bubble level Two
- › Handles Two supplied
- › Damping control Yes
- › Weight 1180g

VEO BH-250S

- › Price £139.99
- › Max load capacity 25kg
- › Arca-Swiss compatible Yes
- › Bubble level One
- › Friction level Yes
- › Weight 640g

First test

“THE ACTION IS SMOOTH WHETHER YOU’RE PANNING WITH FAST OR SLOW SUBJECTS; WHEN LOCKED IN PLACE, THE CAMERA ISN’T GOING ANYWHERE”

Add the VEO PV-18 head and it becomes 86.5cm, so this is a long tripod. The benefit of this design is immediately apparent when the legs are fully extended: the camera platform is 180cm from the ground – just under six foot.

This height is useful if you need a high camera viewpoint for shooting over people’s heads, as an example. When the VEO PV-18 head is fitted with one or both extension arms, it’s easy enough to adjust the camera.

Stability at maximum extension is particularly good. The leg locks are rubber-coated twist grips that are comfortable to use, locking securely with minimal effort, plus the feet can be either rubber or spikes with no extra accessories.

Twisting the tripod’s shoulders shows that there’s a little whip, but nothing to compromise stability in normal use. A strong breeze might be an issue, but that will likely be due to wind buffeting the camera and lens rather than the slim-profile legs.

Given full extension won’t often be needed, and with two sections in use, you get great stability.

For minimum height, the legs can quickly be splayed with the easy-to-use push-button angle locks, but you will need to unscrew the ballast hook for the lowest position. Along with the head, this provides a camera platform that’s 29cm off the ground. In this mode, the spread legs take up quite a bit of space.

The supplied VEO PV-18 head, which sells on its own for £160, is a substantial and beautifully engineered unit with a long camera-mounting plate as well as the option of attaching one or two extension handles for panning and tilt control. Friction control is easily adjustable and the action is smooth, so you’ll encounter no issues when panning with fast or slow subjects. When it is locked in place, the camera isn’t going anywhere.

For extra versatility, additional accessories such as an LCD screen can be attached to the tripod via a magic arm like the Vanguard VEO TSA. This can be done using 3/8in fittings (1/4in adapters are supplied) on the shoulder or on the side of the camera plate. **PN**



QUICK CHANGE Thanks to the ergonomic design of the Alta Pro 3VRL, swapping heads (top: the optional VEO BH-250S with the supplied Alta Pro 3VRL Platform 30; bottom: the supplied VEO PV-18) is quick and positive, perfect for switching between photo and video shooting



STRONG AND STABLE
With a fast-levelling bowl, the tripod is steady even at maximum height

Verdict

The Vanguard Alta Pro 3VRL 303CV18 is an excellent system. The tripod is great to use: the fast-levelling bowl offers impressive stability even when fully extended to its rather useful maximum working height. Its £500 price tag is leading value given the features, video head and performance. In addition, the extra mounting plate supplied means that, if you already own a ball head, you have the versatility of a two-head kit.

All told, there’s no denying this Vanguard tripod offers great value to the hybrid shooter.

PROS Great value, excellent maximum height, impressive stability, versatile, quick head changing

CONS Two heads and legs is quite a weight for location shooting