

Vanguard VEO 3+ 303CT tripod

Can Vanguard's new lightweight tripod live up to our picky editor's discerning taste?

TESTED BY
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I'LL BE HONEST, I've never been a real travel tripod fan. For me, tripods should have legs with no more than three sections to maximise rigidity, and be large enough to either need their own carry case or have to fit to the outside of a photo rucksack. Call me old-fashioned, but that's me.

The issue with this blinkered outlook on three-legged supports is that my favoured models tend to be fairly hefty. Unlike *PN* contributor Kingsley Singleton, who once confessed to owning eight tripods, I have just one – an aluminium Manfrotto 055 – which is both rock solid (good), but also the weight of a small planet (not so good). As a result, there have been times when it has stayed in the car boot or, in fact, never even left the house (worse).

This is where a carbon-fibre model comes in, and Vanguard's latest – the VEO 3+ 303CT – ticks all the boxes for my somewhat particular needs. The 30mm legs are in three sections and it folds down to 79cm; far too

“OUT IN THE FIELD, I HAD NO COMPLAINTS, WITH THE VEO 3+ 303CT QUICKLY ADAPTING TO MY NEEDS”

large to fit in my rucksack, hence it comes with its own carry case and is pleasingly solid. It's also incredibly well-featured – more on this shortly.

Due to the unusual nature of Vanguard's naming conventions, it's worth clarifying what exactly is on test here. The VEO 3+ 303CT refers to the tripod legs only. These cost 1p short of £400. If you already have a preferred head, this is the way to go. I, on the other hand, tested the legs with the VEO BH-250S dual axis ball head, costing £139.99, or £499.99 as a kit. If you want to buy the legs and head, ask for the VEO 3+ 303CBS.

What's immediately apparent about both legs and head is that they're very well-made, giving the impressions of both rigidity and longevity. The rubberised leg locks are quick and easy to adjust. Plus, as and when you get them full of gunk or grit, they unscrew completely for simple cleaning. Similarly, the leg angle can be independently altered using the nicely machined buttons at the top of each leg, while two locks for the centre column are well-sized, thoughtfully designed and simple to lock off. There's also a thread for an accessory arm to attach flash units, LED lights, monitors and more.

The centre column is worthy of discussion. The two aforementioned locks control height – as you'd expect – but also panning. Even without a head attached, you can pan the camera from side to side using the well-damped control. Clever. Then there's the fact the column quickly converts to multiple angles by virtue of the lock above the shoulders.

SPECS

Legs-only specifications in brackets where different

- **Legs material** Carbon fibre
- **Folded height** 79cm (67cm)
- **Max height column down** 151cm (139cm)
- **Max height column up** 177cm (165cm)
- **Min height** 1cm
- **Head** VEO BH-250S dual axis ball head
- **QR plate** QS-62 V3
- **Max load** 25kg
- **Weight** 2.59kg (1.94kg)
- **Contact** vanguardworld.co.uk

With my Manfrotto 055, the column can be positioned horizontally, although only if you remove the head first, which is time consuming. Here, unlock, lift up and angle as you please. It takes seconds. What's more, a second camera plate is provided for two cameras on the one column.

The VEO BH-250S head, while relatively basic, is also solidly made with controls similar to those on the legs. The quick-release plate is Arca-compatible, so longer telephoto optics and spotting scopes with the right foot will fit straight on.

Out in the field, no complaints. The VEO 3+ 303CT quickly adapted to my needs, whatever they might be. Even at maximum height with the centre column extended, it seemed reassuringly solid, although I would never advise using any tripod at full extension. What's more impressive is the speed at which you can go from maximum height to minimum, with the articulated centre column and leg angle adjustments making it simple to get your camera just a few centimetres above ground level in a matter of seconds. **PN**



EASILY ADJUSTABLE Shooting out and about is made quicker and easier thanks to functional components and quick-release mechanisms

Verdict

Supremely versatile, fast, easy to use and well-constructed, there's much to like about the VEO 3+ 303CT, whether you buy the legs on their own, or add the ball head. The centre column is the real star of the show and makes this a great buy for anyone who creates a wide range of images during trips out.

PROS Thoughtful design, quick and easy to get into position, solid yet still lightweight

CONS Price and size won't be right for all