

Pocket the change

Military Marine binos by Steiner

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Carl uses the Military Marine 8x30s on an early morning hunt.



Intrigued by the 'military' in the title, I felt compelled to accept an invite to review Steiner's new Military Marine 8x30 binoculars. That term seems to appeal to some when buying a product and I guess we can all be led to believe that if it's military, it must be good. Steiner's binoculars are actually the civilian version of their battle-proven Warrior models designed for rugged all-round use delivering sharp, clear images with a wide field of view in a lightweight, handy package.

First glance

Out of the box and in the hand, Steiner's claim of compact and lightweight could not be argued, measuring just 110mm and weighing a mere 480g. The body is Steiner's Makrolon housing made from durable polycarbonate coated with NBR long-life rubber armour, creating a lightweight, rugged chassis designed to withstand a claimed 11 Gs of impact force.

The rubber coating is impervious to harsh conditions and built for years of tough, reliable use. For at least the past two decades reputable optics brands have moved away from porro and manufacturing binoculars of roof prism design with parallel lens barrels but not Steiner, as some models are still based on the old but time-proven porro prism format.

To clarify, porro prism put plainly is where the image caught by the objective lens is reflected internally by two 45-degree lenses within each prism and that image delivered parallel but offset and viewed through the narrower ocular lens. Often cheaper to produce than roof prism binoculars, this is by no means a reflection of poor



Preferred method of carriage using the supplied desert camo-style padded case.



Steiner Military Marine as supplied, boxed with accessories.

image quality and Steiner have managed to produce porro prism binoculars which are both compact and comfortable to hold. Steiner's floating prism design uses flexible silicone lens mounts to help absorb severe shock, sharp impact and abuse without damage, reinforcing the binos' so-called military credentials.

Upon closer inspection, starting south it's obvious Military Marine binoculars are devoid of a centre focus wheel. However, both ocular lenses are adjustable for focus in a dual dioptre arrangement to suit the individual's eyes and, once set, are generally left alone. Steiner calls this the Sports Autofocus System which, once initially focused, keeps images razor sharp from 18m to infinity and avoids constant focal adjustments while viewing moving targets. I was a touch sceptical of this at first but my preconceived prejudices were quashed during a subsequent field test. The ocular lenses are housed and protected within rubber eyecups, gripped and rotated for adjustment by way of large block-style lugs.

The centre bridge is naturally hinged to suit the user's interpupillary distance and adjusted easily with both hands while remaining firm enough to hold the eye position, once set to the correct dimension. Either side of the body are integral provisions for a neck strap or lanyard attachment and the binoculars come supplied with a padded desert-style camo case and neck strap (I opted to carry them round the neck in the padded case).

The rubber armour housing also has large block-style lugs running lengthways, spaced around barrel circumference for a positive grip in slippery conditions. At the

northern-most end of the Military Marine 8x30s is their multi-coated 30mm objective lens combined with 8x magnification for an approximate 370m field of view at 1000m. The objective lenses are protected by removable rubber caps sitting flush to the lens' outer and attached securely to the front of the bridge hinge.

Field test

To form a definite opinion on any product it's important to put it through its paces, and over a few months I was fortunate enough to use the binoculars in real hunting environments to assess their credentials. Their compact nature made for easy transportation in the map pocket of my hunting trousers and their weight didn't make it feel like a brick - one of the big advantages of polycarbonate construction for weight reduction. My son opted to carry them in the supplied camo padded case and found them quite comfortable over many a mile through the steep country we hunted together.

As mentioned, I initially had concerns over the absence of a focus wheel in this Military Marine design, yet homing in on an object 100m away by adjusting the dual dioptre (Sports Autofocus) had me set for further viewing and I was pleasantly surprised at the long depth of field. Objects as close as 20m to as far as I'd care to look for a realistic hunting range out to roughly 1km were as good as you could expect without a centre focus wheel, images quite clear from the 30mm objective lenses paired with its 8x times magnification. Obviously, a slight adjustment to the Sports Autofocus may be necessary between users

although my son and I were able to share without adjusting.

The binoculars are now veterans of numerous early morning and late afternoon ventures, contributing substantially to a successful pig-hunting trip. The advantage a good pair of binoculars can give you on a hunt cannot be underestimated and searching areas for potential pig activity in heavily-timbered creek lines was made just that bit easier thanks to the Military Marine 8x30s.

Conclusion

I'm often critical of hunting optics as I feel you should always equip yourself with the best you can afford and was confident Steiner's promotion of 'Military Marine' binoculars was not for supplying the world's armed forces, rather a marketing strategy aimed at civilian buyers of their military design heritage.

Interestingly, Steiner supply the ADF with various models of binoculars including with range-finding capabilities. They have by no means compared Military Marine binoculars to any other high-end European glass (including their own), but have produced an affordable, good quality, entry level product for those starting out.

With a recommended retail price of \$429 (at time of writing) they're excellent value for money and well worth considering for such rugged-built and affordable binoculars. The Military Marine 8x30s are covered by Steiner's Heritage warranty and available from multiple stockists across Australia. More at www.berettaaustralia.com.au ●