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First tests

PRICE: **£329.99**

VANGUARDWORLD.CO.UK

Vanguard VEO 3T+ 264CB

Groundbreaking innovation in the world of tripods is rarely the stuff of headlines, but one that made big news in recent times was Vanguard's Multi-Angle Centre Column – one of many features in the brand's versatile new travel tripod



IMAGE Bring the tripod's MACC feature into play and you get almost any camera position you can think of – and not just facing straight down. The supplied MA-1 also lets you attach a monitor, a light, or another camera if you want

THE IDEAL TRIPOD does not exist, because every photographer has different needs. But some models get closer than others. The new Vanguard VEO 3T+ 264CB certainly has impressive credentials, with its mix of portability, usability, build quality and versatility.

The VEO 3T+ 264CB is a four-section, carbon-fibre tripod designed with travel and portability very much in mind. The whole unit, including the VEO BH-160S ball head, weighs in at 2275g, measuring just 48cm with legs reverse-folded. With a quality padded bag included in the kit, this pod sits happily in most suitcases with no problem, and the kit is finished off with a ballast hook, a couple of hex keys, a 3/8in to 1/4in adapter, and a set of spiked feet.

The VEO 3T+ 264CB's headline feature is the Multi-Angle Centre Column,

an innovation already seen on some Vanguard models. The feature is easy to bring into operation, and you can achieve all sorts of camera angles very quickly, without having to disassemble anything. Essentially, all you do is loosen the two large locks, extend the centre column to its limit and, once free of the shoulder, it can be angled and length-adjusted to whatever is needed, before tightening the locks to secure position. The supplied MA1 accessory adapter lets you add a light or monitor to the column, too.

The beauty of the MACC is that you are not restricted to one plane, or even any set angle. Of course, it's great for shooting straight-down flatlays, but you can easily get a worms-eye viewpoint. If your subject is on an angle, it's simple enough to get the camera's focal plane parallel to the subject. You must exercise a little caution, because – with the column extended in the MACC mount – it means over-balancing is a risk, so make sure you don't release the pod until the legs have been positioned to prevent this,

or you've added a counterweight, such as your camera bag, using the supplied ballast hook. The twist grip legs can be set at three different angles (23°, 50° and 80°) and released by pushing the large release button.

Once the shot is finished, just loosen the same two locking knobs, remove the MA1 and ballast hook (if fitted), and the centre column can be quickly returned in its default position and you're ready to move on.

Our test 264CB came with a new Dual-Axis VEO BH-160S ball head. The Dual-Axis features allow the quick-release platform and base of the head to be rotated independently for precise positioning. The head takes Arca-Swiss plates, and is secured to the centre column with three hex screws. That means there's no risk of it loosening when the ball head is in use. Plus, there's a bubble level on the quick-release platform, so you need to level the head before fitting the camera. There's also a bubble level on the tripod's shoulder.

The ball is tightened with a single large wing knob – and there's no extra tension fine-tuning control, but its action is smooth and it locks firmly in position. Finally, there's a smaller locking knob to lock the ball head base in place.

The MACC lets you explore camera angles really easily and the 264CB is also good in normal use. The leg locks are twist grips and lock firmly without having to exert too much pressure. Vanguard is also keen to point out that if you need to clean the leg joints, it's easy to do so. Indeed it is – simply unscrew, pull all the way out, then you'll find two easily relocatable pieces of hard plastic. Clean those, the legs and the twist grip itself, and it reassembles very easily.

The tripod's maximum height without the centre column is 1.31m, which is high enough for most situations. If you give the set-up Vanguard a firm twist, stability

SPECS

- › **Price** £329.99
- › **In the box** Tripod legs, VEO BH-160S ball head, bag with carry strap, ballast hook and MA1 multi-mount adapter
- › **Legs material** Carbon fibre, one detaches for monopod
- › **Centre column** One section, MACC, ballast hook supplied
- › **Leg locks** Twist grips
- › **Load capacity** 15kg
- › **Folded length** 48cm (reverse-folded) 66.5cm (closed)
- › **Leg sections** Four
- › **Leg angles** Three
- › **Max height (centre column down)** 131cm
- › **Max height (centre column fully extended)** 156cm
- › **Monopod max height** 126cm (with VEO BH-160S ball head attached)
- › **Monopod min height** 53cm (with VEO BH-160S ball head attached)
- › **Minimum height** 63cm (centre column in, legs in default position) 50cm (centre column in, legs splayed)
- › **Bubble level** Yes
- › **Weight** 2275g with VEO BH-160S ball head
- › **Contact** vanguardworld.co.uk

is good. If you require more, extending the centre column – without loosening the MACC lock – takes a mounted camera to 1.60m. At this height, the viewfinder is at my eye level (for reference, I'm average height at 1.75m). Stability with the centre column extended is decent and very usable, unless there's a howling gale! **WC**



ABOVE The new Dual-Axis ball head means the base and the quick-release mounting plate can be rotated accurately, without having to loosen the ball head itself



ABOVE Setting a different leg angle is done by pushing down a large, smooth-action button

Verdict

The tripod marketplace is packed with products – some very good, some less good, some quite poor. The Vanguard VEO 3T+ 264CB certainly joins the very good list. It's lightweight and compact, turning in an impressive performance as a normal tripod. Plus, the MACC feature gives it an extra dimension, making the 264CB not just good for travel, but useful for nature, indoors, video and macro work. Such versatility for £330 means Vanguard's newest pod is very much a winner.

PROS MACC, large leg-release buttons, useful maximum height, Dual-Axis ball head works well, supplied MA1 adapter, marked centre column, compact, good stability, load capacity, lovely to use, monopod option

CONS Nothing