

PRICE: £299.99

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Vanguard VEO 3+ 263CB

Vanguard's latest VEO 3+ tripods promise tremendous flexibility, regardless of what you like to shoot. We tried the carbon-fibre 263CB to see if it delivers

VANGUARD HAS ACHIEVED something very difficult to do in the world of tripods. It has managed to bring genuine innovation to its products. The multi-angle central column (MACC) has made an appearance on previous models. It's so neat that it is no surprise to see it featured on the latest range of four VEO 3+ models – two carbon and two aluminium alloy.

The MACC can be moved very neatly and quickly almost 360° in any direction to give the ideal camera position. That's whether you're shooting flatlays, fungi at ground level or any other creative angle you may desire. All you have to do is loosen the two centre column locking knobs, release the MACC locking lever (that's the one with the orange-coloured sliding lock) and pull out the centre column to its maximum extension. You'll find the centre column comes free of the tripod shoulder. Then, you can angle or rotate it to where you need the camera to be and lock it in the required position. It

is probably quicker to do than to explain and I found it smooth, intuitive and the head locks firmly in place.

Of course, one thing you must be wary of is overbalancing, but the centre column can be locked in a full range of positions to avoid this or you can counterbalance the camera with your bag, for instance. A ballast hook is supplied but this needs removing before using the MACC or when you're packing it away.

What you also get included in the bag is the VEO MA1 multi-mount that slides on to the centre column in its MACC working position. This neat device means you can attach extra kit to your tripod. You can, for example, place a monitor, microphone, flash or even another camera next to the main camera – with the appropriate fitting.

I have to say, the MACC is a very neat feature and great to use once you are familiar with the various locking knobs and levers and how they work. I found



ABOVE Fit an L-grip on your camera and the 263CB with its MACC means you can get your camera almost to ground level



ABOVE Using the supplied MA1 mount lets you fit accessories. It has a 1/4in screw fitting, so you may need extra fittings to hold different devices. **RIGHT** The VEO+ 263CB comes with a BH-160 ball head. You can see the large push buttons to adjust leg angle and the MACC locking lever, which itself has a lock, the orange slider



the locking lever, for example, didn't press home fully until I realised that the column locking mechanism has set 15° positions and you have to be at one of them before the lever works.

Another point of design innovation is the large thumb operated push lock buttons that let you adjust leg angles quickly and comfortably.

One of the 263CB's legs unscrews at the shoulder. You can combine it with the centre column for a tall monopod or, if you prefer something shorter, you can just add the ball head. The ball head is locked to the tripod and requires a use of the supplied tool to undo the hex screws first.

The 263CB at full extension with the centre column up gives a camera platform that's 176cm from the ground. So, that's

good for tall photographers or for a high shooting position. Without using any centre column extension, the platform height is 147cm. That's still very useful.

There are more options when shooting low. The minimum height without using the MACC and the legs in normal mode is 73cm and 55cm with legs splayed to 50°. But the fun really starts when you bring the MACC into play. If you have an L-grip on the camera, you can literally get down to ground level with the legs fully splayed with the help of the MACC.

And alongside this versatility, you get decent stability, too. So, whether you are shooting high or low, getting sharp results at long shutter speeds is not an issue with sound camera technique.

The legs' twist grips work smoothly, locking efficiently, and the centre column glides up and down very smoothly with no stickiness, either.

The VEO BH-160 ball head is a solid performer. On this test, I tried full-frame and medium format mirrorless cameras with no issues at all. It is Arca-Swiss compatible and there is a bubble level on the camera plate. This is handy, but it does mean you have to get it levelled off before fitting the camera. Two knobs lock the ball firmly in place, although there's no extra friction control. **WC**

SPECS

- ▶ **Price** £299.99
- ▶ **In the box** Vanguard VEO 3+ 263CB, BH-160 ball head with QS-V2 plate, carrying bag and shoulder strap, MA1 adapter, spiked feet, hex keys, camera plate, ballast hook
- ▶ **Legs material** Carbon fibre
- ▶ **Load capacity** 15kg
- ▶ **Folded length** 76cm (with head)
- ▶ **Leg sections** Three
- ▶ **Leg angles** Three – 23°, 50°, 80°
- ▶ **Max height (centre column down)** 147cm
- ▶ **Max height (centre column extended)** 172.5cm, max 181cm in monopod conversion
- ▶ **Minimum height** 56cm (with centre column in place), much lower with MACC
- ▶ **Bubble level** One on shoulder, one on ball head
- ▶ **Weight** 2130g including head
- ▶ **Head** VEO BH-160
- ▶ **Plate fitting** Arca-Swiss
- ▶ **Contact** vanguardworld.co.uk



Verdict

The Vanguard VEO 3+ 263CB is a fine piece of kit. Its flexibility is impressive, and if you need to get the camera into awkward positions, this is the tripod for you. The extra accessory support options provided by the MA1 adapter are very welcome, and all round this tripod offers an impressive performance. Its price is right, too.

PROS Incredible versatility, good to use, MA1 adapter

CONS Quite long when folded down, legs flex slightly at full extension. The rubber feet are tough to get off