

Macro Lens Recommendations

From Allan Walls Photography

Here is a collection of macro lenses that I am completely comfortable recommending for your consideration. I have first hand experience with all of these lenses, and I either own, or have formerly owned, the majority of them (the others I have borrowed or rented). All of these lenses are good, but some of them are great. Some are better than others for beginners, and that is noted, where appropriate. These are my opinions, and my style and preferences may not line up with your own, but you won't regret owning any of these lenses.

Some of the links in the table are paid links and, as an Amazon Affiliate, I may earn a small commission from qualified purchases.

Let me know if you have any questions or if there is a lens I need to consider adding.

LENS	MY RATING	PROS	CONS	NOTES	WANT ONE?
Nikon AF-S Micro-Nikkor 105mm f/2.8 IF-ED	***	Solidly built, weather sealed, incredibly sharp, fast focusing, a joy to use. The lens I most regret having sold.	Expensive (\$900) but worth it. Literally nothing bad to say about it.	One of the best field macro lenses made. \$200 less than Canon's top of the line, and a better lens.	Check Price
Nikon AF-S DX Micro-Nikkor 85mm f/3.5 ED VR	**	Light but well built, VR comes in handy for handheld, very sharp, fast focusing. A killer all round macro lens for crop-frame cameras. Also excellent for focus stacking.	For DX bodies only, expensive for a DX lens (\$560), getting hard to find.	A great walking around macro lens for APS-C shooters. Also, a fantastic lens to learn on.	Can't find any in stock.

LENS	MY RATING	PROS	CONS	NOTES	WANT ONE?
Nikon Micro-Nikkor 200mm f/4 D ED IF	****	The very best macro lens in the world, supremely well built, there is nothing sharper, long working distance, distortion free, perfect colors.	Heavy, getting very hard to find, expensive but worth every penny. Expect to pay at least \$1,300 for a good copy on the used market.	It gets 4 stars out of a possible three, because it really is that good.	Good luck!
Nikon AF 60mm f/2.8 D	**	Very sharp indeed, true 1:1 in a compact lens, has manual aperture ring, a bargain at \$520. Also, a really nice standard lens for much more than just macro.	Not the best for field macro, a bit too short. This an older "D" lens and it's pretty chunky, but I like that.	An ideal studio macro lens, gorgeous feel and look, another awesome lens to learn studio macro with.	Check Price
Nikon AF 50mm f/1.8 D	***	How does a dirt-cheap, non-macro standard prime get three stars as a macro lens? Because I said so... everyone needs one of these \$100 beauties.	The perfect 50mm prime for learning how to use reversed lenses. Bright, fast, CA-free. Nothing bad to say about this wonderful little lens	This is a required purchase for all new macro photographers who are even thinking about learning how to use extension tubes and reversing rings. And t is also a fantastically sharp prime lens for anything else.	Check Price
Canon EF 100mm f/2.8L IS USM	***	Canon's best macro offering, super-sharp, fast focus, great hybrid image stabilization, weather sealed	Too expensive (\$1,300), the lens is made of plastic, but I guess it is very good plastic.	A great field lens, light and fast, easy to lug around. Everything you would expect from an "L".	Check Price
Canon EF-S 60mm f/2.8 Macro USM	*	Small, light, well built, fast focus, relatively inexpensive at \$400. Sharp, with good image quality.	A pretty ordinary lens, decent IQ but not the best. Not as good as the Nikon 85mm f/3.5.	A very decent lens but there are better options available. I like this more as a compact all-rounder than as a serious macro lens. Too short for the field.	Check Price
Sony FE 90mm f/2.8 Macro G OSS	***	A great lens, solidly built, fast, quiet auto focus, looks gorgeous, excellent image quality.	Heavy on a small camera, expensive at \$1,100. If I had a Sony camera, I would buy this lens.	This is the only pro-quality full frame, auto focus macro lens from Sony. If a lens could look sexy, this would be a sexy lens	Check Price

LENS	MY RATING	PROS	CONS	NOTES	WANT ONE?
Tamron SP 90mm f/2.8 Di Macro 1:1 VC USD for Nikon	***	I love this lens, solidly built, weather sealed, fast, quiet and accurate AF, sharp as a tack, no aberrations to speak of, great bargain at only \$650. Also, my favorite lens for product photography.	Some have reported AF issues (hunting) on this and the Canon version. I have not encountered any AF issues. Or any other issues, for that matter.	I can't speak for the Canon version, but the Nikon version is my everyday macro lens. Great in the field and studio, great product lens also. Not to be confused with the previous version, which was nice, but not this nice.	Check Price
Sigma Macro 105mm f/2.8 EX DG OS HSM for Canon	**	Great lens at great price (\$500), very nice image quality, excellent image stabilization, true 1:1, 9-blade aperture (nice bokeh when used for portraits).	No weather sealing, the Nikon version costs \$70 more. The copy I had did hunt for focus occasionally.	A low-cost macro lens with all the bells and whistles, I only had it for a couple of days but enough to be impressed.	Check Price
Canon RF 85mm f/2 Macro IM STM	**	Fast, sharp, a very nice walking around lens, well made with solid feel, gets two stars because it is a nice, solid lens (if not quite a nice solid <i>macro</i> lens), great IS, strong low-light lens	Not a "real" macro lens, only getting you to 1:2, Expensive at \$600, only for mirrorless Canon cameras.	This is not a really serious macro lens, too short for field macro, not enough magnification for the studio, more of a cool all-rounder that takes nice closeups.	Check Price
Laowa 15mm f/4 Wide Angle Macro	**	A very interesting lens! A wide-angle lens for FF cameras with a +/- 6mm shift mechanism for APS-C cameras. Does what few other lenses can – super close up (1:1) foregrounds with wide backgrounds. Metal body, feels very sturdy, comes in all common mounts. Surprisingly sharp.	Not easy to use – takes a lot of practice. It is a fully manual lens. A little costly at \$500, but for the world's widest macro lens, it may well be worth it. large exposed front element, so be careful.	It felt like a gimmicky lens, until I used it. Very cool images with unique perspectives. Definitely takes getting used to. Need to have one for more than a week.	Check Price

LENS	MY RATING	PROS	CONS	NOTES	WANT ONE?
Laowa 100mm f/2.8 2x Ultra Macro APO	**	Fully manual lens, 2:1, full frame and APS-C, remarkably little aberration for a lens of this price (\$450), available in most mounts. The 2:1 is real, which is pretty awesome. Very sharp.	The build is fairly solid, but it lacks that "\$1,000-lens-feel". I like the manual aperture and focus, but some may not.	The Canon version allows camera control of aperture, all others are manual. This is a pretty good ultra-macro lens, especially at the price.	Check Price
Laowa 25mm f/2.8 2.5-5x Ultra Macro	*	A good idea, but only gets part of the way there. Surprisingly sharp, and a lot of magnification, but there are better ways to get 5x magnification, with consistently better image quality	It is made of metal, but isn't a very substantial lens, a manual lens (aperture) but no focus ring (per se... it has a "magnification ring" ... you set the magnification you want and focus by moving the camera), no infinity focus, DoF is as shallow as you would expect, quite a bit of CA at wider apertures, lighting becomes very frustrating at tighter apertures. It's cheap (\$400), but somehow doesn't feel like a bargain	Available for most mounts, a fiddly lens to use (I only had it for a few hours and didn't get to use it in the studio). This does not feel like a serious macro optic. I'd like to test it more thoroughly, and will, if Venus Optics ever answers my email.	Check Price
Irix 150mm f/2.8 Macro for Nikon F	**	A serious newcomer from Korea. Well made, manual focus lens, perfect for field macro. Has a focus lock, which helps accurate "body focusing" in the field. It is really very sharp. I think it is a better lens than the \$525 price tag might suggest.	Nikon (F), Canon (EF), and Pentax only. Manual focus only. Not a great regular lens, where I would prefer to have autofocus available. But an excellent lens for field work. Nothing to complain about.	A serious field macro lens, with everything I need and nothing I don't. As with most field lenses, you need to carry some light with you, a ring flash is perfect. I had this lens for a short time but plan to get one of my own - unless I win the lottery (that we don't have here), in which case I'll get a Micro Nikkor 200mm f/4, instead.	Check Price

LENS	MY RATING	PROS	CONS	NOTES	WANT ONE?
<p>Canon MP-E 65mm f/2.5 1-5x Macro</p>	<p>**</p>	<p>A wildly popular manual focus, macro-only lens for full frame and APS-C cameras. Sharp as can be, well designed, and beautifully engineered. Absolutely not for macro-newcomers.</p>	<p>Like the other 5x lens in this list, it feels like technology looking for a way to show off. Yes, it offers crazy high magnification, but there are just better ways to get there. With a depth of field (at 5x) of less than a third of a millimeter, this is not a field macro lens. And in the studio? Give me a Mitutoyo 5x Apo instead. This lens costs over \$1,000.</p>	<p>Very tricky to use in the field, you will need to carry light with you, crazy shallow depth of field, and a working distance down to 40mm. I would rather have a good 1:1 macro lens for use in the field and a quality objective in the studio, where 5:1 extreme macro belongs. This lens is a work of art and an engineering masterpiece, but not a very useful macro lens (for me, at least).</p>	<p>Check Price</p>