

**WHAT GUN WILL YOU CHOOSE?**  
8 Nikon-fit flashguns fight it out – see which one comes out best!

# SHOOT THE GREAT OUTDOORS

We show you the best settings, lenses and lighting to shoot your best-ever landscapes **p28**

## PRO MASTERCLASS ACTION STATIONS!

A lucky reader learns to shoot high-octane winter sports **p8**



“When most kids dreamt of the soccer boots they wanted, I was looking through photo mags for my first Nikon SLR”  
Ross Haddinott, Macro Photographer **p86**



**PHOTO MAGAZINE OF THE YEAR**

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Swing-out screen SLR gets 24-megapixel facelift **p9**

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Nikon's new 70-200mm f/4 telezoom tested **p102**

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Six ringflash set-ups for getting sexy-looking portraits **p106**



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## TEST TEAM The world's toughest tests

# MINI TEST FLASH FOR PORTRAITS

Want soft, even lighting for taking sexy portrait photos? We put the leading ring flash systems to the test

**S**lot any flashgun into your hotshoe and you immediately run into problems with portraiture. They give a hard, unflattering quality of light, and even if you mount a diffusion dome, you're likely to get dark shadows under the nose and chin or to one side of the sitter's head.

Ring flash systems use a round tube that encircles the lens, providing soft, near shadowless illumination of your subject. This is not only useful for macro photography but for portraiture too, especially in the field of fashion photography. A bonus is that you can get distinctive circular catchlights in the sitter's eyes – and a halo-like hazy shadow around the subject.

Options include powerful, complete ring flash systems, converters for studio flash heads, standalone hotshoe-mounting solutions, and adapters for use with standard flashguns. We've tested examples of all four types, each of which has its own pros and cons. Let's take a closer look at what's on offer. **1**

### UP CLOSE FIVE THINGS TO LOOK OUT FOR...

From power to add-ons, here are the things to consider if you want to run rings around conventional flash

- 01 Power considerations**  
If you want to compete with the brightness of the sun in outdoor portraiture, you'll need plenty of poke. A really powerful all-in-one system such as the Lencarta gives maximum power.
- 02 Weight and handling**  
The size and weight of a full-size studio flash head, ring light converter, camera and lens can result in an unwieldy setup that's usually too heavy for comfortable handheld shooting.
- 03 The drawbacks of converters**  
Ring flash converters for flashguns sap output power, so you'll generally find you have a shooting range of around three metres.
- 04 TTL flash metering**  
A bonus of dedicated ring-type flashguns and flashgun converters is that they enable automatic flash metering, as well as being much smaller and more lightweight to use.
- 05 Additional lights**  
For the ultimate in portrait lighting, ring flash is often best used as part of a group that includes studio flash heads.



## Ray Flash Adapter

► £150, \$200 ► www.ray-flash.com

The Ray Flash mounts onto a flashgun, diverts its output and fires it through a ring around the lens. It does all this without losing an inordinate amount of flash power, so it manages a healthy shooting range, and works with TTL and manual flash settings. The Ray Flash doesn't feel that robust, but its light weight is good news considering that it's fully supported by the camera's hotshoe. One drawback is that there are four different versions for Nikon equipment, each of which works

**NPhoto VERDICT**  
**PROS...** Quick and easy to fit, good shooting reach  
**CONS...** Each version lacks wide-ranging compatibility  
**WE SAY...** A good budget choice if you stick to a particular body  
**OVERALL** ★★★★★



## Nissin MF18 Macro Flash

► £280, \$440 ► www.nissindigital.com

The self-contained Nissin MF18 has a Guide Number of GN16 (ISO100) and provides slightly greater maximum output than either the Ray Flash or Orbis with a flashgun. It comes with a range of adapter rings for mounting the flash ring tube directly onto lenses with filter threads of 52-77mm, although wide-angle shooting results in extreme vignetting. The flash tube is driven from a controller that sits in the camera's hotshoe. This has plenty of intuitive menu that uses a colour LCD, similar to that of the Nissin Di866 MkII (see page 114).

**NPhoto VERDICT**  
**PROS...** Good onboard controls, easy attachment  
**CONS...** Notches on the flash tube can be seen in catchlights  
**WE SAY...** It produces an even lighting effect  
**OVERALL** ★★★★★

## Ring flash kits



## Rotolight RL48-B Creative Colour Kit

► £170, \$200 ► www.rotolight.com

This kit is based on a ring of LEDs powered by three AA batteries. It comes with a hotshoe mounting adapter and a collection of Lee filters, for balancing the colour temperature and adding coloured light effects. There's no facility to control the strength of the output, so ND filters are also supplied, all of which fit into the lighting ring. The Rotolight kit has two drawbacks. First, the low light intensity gives a limited shooting distance, making it more suited to macro than portrait photography. Second, the hole in the ring is too small to fit around camera lenses, so it has to be used off-axis.

**NPhoto VERDICT**  
**PROS...** Constant lighting will appeal to video shooters  
**CONS...** Limited shooting range, won't fit around camera lenses  
**WE SAY...** Only really works as a supplemental fill-in light  
**OVERALL** ★★★★★



## Orbis Ringflash

► £181, \$175 ► www.enlightphotopro.com

The Orbis Ringflash mounts directly onto your flashgun. The mounting aperture is pretty much universal. You hold the flashgun with the Orbis attached, and connect it to the camera via a wireless link or remote cable (not supplied). It's easy to reposition the Orbis to surround the lens or to use it off-axis. A sturdy optional mounting arm is also available. Attachment to flashguns isn't entirely solid, and the connection may need help from some gaffer tape or Velcro strips. Flash power is cut down a little more than with the Ray Flash, but the output is slightly softer and more flattering.

**NPhoto VERDICT**  
**PROS...** Lovely quality, works with any camera/flashgun combo  
**CONS...** Needs remote flash cord or wireless (not supplied)  
**WE SAY...** A superb ring flash adapter at a sensible price  
**OVERALL** ★★★★★



## Bowens Ringlite Converter

► £291, \$349 ► www.bowensdirect.com

The Bowens converter feels every inch a pro piece of kit. It comes with two mounting brackets, one or both of which need to be attached (for landscape or portrait orientation shooting respectively), when fixed to a Bowens studio flash head. For true mobility, you'll also need a Bowens Travelpak rechargeable battery, which costs a further £500/\$600. The system is fiddly to set up, and the modelling lamp needs to be removed from the flash head before attaching the converter. It's possible to handhold the assembly, with camera, but at around 6.3kg it's uncomfortably heavy.

**NPhoto VERDICT**  
**PROS...** Lots of power on tap for indoor and outdoor shooting  
**CONS...** Heavy. Pricy if you don't own a Bowens studio flash head  
**WE SAY...** Works well, but you'll need strong arms or a tripod  
**OVERALL** ★★★★★



## Lencarta Safari Li-on Ringflash Kit

► £850, \$1377 ► www.lencarta.com

Aimed primarily at portraiture pros, the Safari kit has been updated to include a Li-on battery pack, which can supply power for two flash heads (including regular Safari flash heads) and is just light enough to sling over a shoulder. The ring flash head itself retails at £200. It has no built-in power facility, but it's blissfully lightweight and mounts to the camera via a simple bracket. Build quality is excellent, and the power for the 600Ws ring flash head is fully adjustable between fairly low and blinding via a rotary knob. There's also a flash diffuser and shoulder bag supplied.

**NPhoto VERDICT**  
**PROS...** The most powerful in the group, and great for outdoors  
**CONS...** Costly, but well priced compared with other pro systems  
**WE SAY...** When you need real power, this is a great buy  
**OVERALL** ★★★★★