

MACRO LENS WITH LIFE-SIZE REPRODUCTION
ONLY SUITABLE FOR DSLRS WITH APS-C SENSORS

Tamron SP AF 60mm f/2 Di II LD Macro

The latest macro lens from Tamron is designed for use with APS-C sensors and boasts life-size reproduction and a fast f/2 maximum aperture

Guide price: £540 Street price: £540

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IF YOU'VE BEEN USING SLRS as long as I have, then you'll know that the Tamron 90mm f/2.8 macro lens has long been held in high regard as a classic. This means that the release of a close-up companion, in the form of the SP AF 60mm f/2 Di II LD is one that is sure to attract widespread interest from dedicated macro photographers, especially when word gets around that it's an absolute beauty to use.

Designed for use exclusively with DSLRs with APS-C sensors, the latest Tamron has an effective focal length of 90mm on Nikon and Sony models and 96mm on Canon's EOS range. This is the most popular focal length for macro photography, but the 60mm holds an ace card in the form of its maximum aperture of f/2, which gives it a couple of big advantages over its rivals. The first is that a wider maximum aperture means a brighter viewfinder image, which is especially important for macro photography, as it's generally recommended that you use manual focus for critical sharpness. The second is that a wider aperture allows you to capture images with incredibly shallow depth-of-field, for allowing part of a subject to appear pin-sharp while the areas around it rapidly falls out of focus.

The Tamron 60mm lens is incredibly compact and lightweight, especially in view of its fast maximum aperture, so it won't take up much space in your kit bag. It's nicely designed, with a focus window at the centre of the barrel and a large manual focus ring that has a textured finish that makes it easy to grip. While the lens offers an AF/M switch, it also offers electronic manual focusing, so you can quickly fine-tune focus manually even if the lens is set to AF. Our Canon-fit lens, tested on a Canon EOS 400D and EOS 450D, delivered fast and accurate AF when shooting portraits and close-ups. However, on the occasions it needs to hunt, as with all macro lenses, you'll wait longer than you would have to with standard lenses, due to the extended focusing range it has to cover.

SPECIFICATIONS

- Maximum aperture: f/2
- Minimum aperture: f/22
- Minimum focus: 0.23m
- Maximum magnification: 1:1 (life-size)
- Filter thread: 55mm
- Lens construction: 14 elements in ten groups (includes two Low Dispersion glass elements)
- Filter thread: 55mm
- Number of diaphragm blades: Seven
- Diameter x Length: 73x80mm
- Weight: 400g
- Supplied accessory: Lens hood
- AF fittings: Canon, Nikon AF-D & Sony

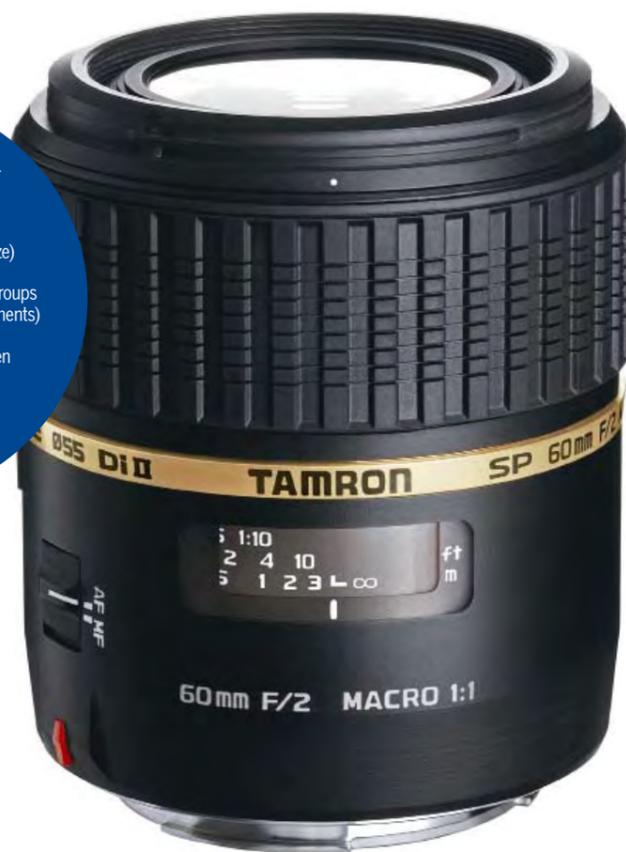


Image quality is excellent, with very high sharpness and good contrast throughout the image frame. In fact, the lens resolution is arguably higher than many image sensors can reveal, so producing sharp images shouldn't be an issue so long as you focus correctly. One area to take care with is with your choice of aperture, as selecting the maximum aperture produces an unbelievably shallow depth-of-field. There is little doubt that selecting f/2 will allow for very creative results, but ensure you check images on your LCD monitor, as with close-ups the limited depth-of-field is extreme to say the least! **Daniel Lezano**



This image of a young (and very small) garden frog, reveals the close-up capabilities of the Tamron lens and the extremely limited depth-of-field when shooting at f/2. Inset below is the same scene at f/13.

Closest rivals to the Tamron SP AF 60mm f/2 Di II LD Macro



SIGMA 50MM F/2.8 DG MACRO £320
Small, compact and high quality lens offering 1:1 reproduction ratio and closest focus of 18.9cm. Minimum aperture of f/45 is useful. As part of the DG range, it can be used with full-frame or APS-C lenses and is available in Canon, Nikon, Pentax, Sigma and Sony fittings.



SIGMA 70MM F/2.8 DG MACRO £500
Another excellent macro lens in the Sigma range, that doubles as a great portrait lens. Offers a good working distance of 25cm for 1:1 reproduction and high quality optics. But maximum aperture can't match the new Tamron. Available for Canon, Nikon, Pentax, Sigma and Sony.



TAMRON SP AF 90MM F/2.8 DI MACRO £460
The latest version of Tamron's classic macro lens has been optically refined for digital and film users. It has a minimum focus of 29cm and acts as a useful medium telephoto when used on DSLRs with APS-C sensors. Available in Canon, Nikon, Pentax and Sony fittings.



The short minimum focus allows you to get close for frame-filling shots of subjects where your standard zoom may struggle.



The level of detail that the Tamron can capture is incredible, but focusing is critical to ensure the maximum possible sharpness.

Verdict

The Tamron 60mm lens proves to be a very tidy package that continues the tradition for high-quality optics set by its 90mm stablemate. In terms of handling and performance, there is little to fault. While it does cost slightly more than rivals like Sigma's 70mm and Tamron's 90mm, I do think that the benefits offered by the maximum aperture of f/2 warrant the cost and this lens offers a unique proposition that you can't find elsewhere. If you disagree, one of its three main rivals probably represent better value for you. However, give this lens a try and you won't be disappointed!



Handling	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Performance	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

Overall rating ★★★★★