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PENTAX Zooms

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17-28mm

FA17-28/3.5-4.5 is a fisheye zoom. Comparing it to the 17/4 fisheye prime, you'll find that the prime is "wider" than the zoom at 17mm setting. On the technical side, the lens has excellent flare control and very good light distribution (almost no visible light falloff at any focal length). When compared to the FA20/2.8, it's not as sharp, but gives very good and contrasty slides and prints. The only bad thing about it is that there is no way to put a filter on it, either in front or behind.

20-35mm

FA 20-35/4 AL, is good optically and sufficient mechanically. This means, the optical performance allows almost professional results, while the mechanical quality fits normal amateur use only. This lens might be considered as a wide angle version of the FA28-70/4 AL, both in mechanics and in optical standards. The lens is 10-20% more expensive than comparable Minolta or Canon lenses.

Note: David has reported a sample of this lens that featured optical performance that was on par with the 20mm prime as well as professional zooms in similar range made by competition. Therefore, be aware of the sample-to-sample variations of this zoom. Go Directly To...

24-35mm

M 24-35/3.5 is highly recommended. This beautiful little lens is well-made, lightweight, metal, has very good handling and first class optics.

24-50mm

M 24-50 is reported to produce flare.

A 24-50 was compared to M24-35 and is said to be larger and not as sharp or as contrasty

28-70mm

FA28-70/4 AL is a cheap, consumer zoom that features light, plastic build, loose and narrow focus ring, but, nevertheless, delivers excellent results. It's sharp, and the flare is very well controlled. There is some distortion present at the wide end: use it for architecture shots at your own risk.

28-80mm

Non-SMC A28-80/3.5-4.8 zoom is a bad performer at the long end, has low build quality, and even lower resell value.

The SMC version of A28-80 has a slightly better reputation but still nothing to be excited about.

FA28-80/3.5-5.6 is badly build and little optical quality to brag about.

28-105mm

The original FA28-105/4-5.6 with power zoom feature is large, twice as expensive as the new one, and features very good optical design, which produces sharp images with good color rendition. Good manual focusing and 1:3 macro capability at 105mm end.

The new FA 28-105 (IF), which is sometimes also called "silver", is the Pentax version of an original Tamron lens. It is more affordable and smaller than the old version. Optically, it is reported to be almost as good as the original. Due to the internal focusing mechanism, it focuses fast but manual focusing is a bit steep. Like all internal focusing constructions, you will loose a bit of the focal length in the close up range, so the macro capability of this lens is only standard. The focusing ring is very well damped for manual focusing. Optically, Roberto reported it to be as good as his FA28-70/4 AL.

40-80mm

M40-80/2.8-4 is ok optically. It features push-pull zooming and varifocal design. It's not rare and can be acquired for ~\$100. [Bob S.]

28-135mm

A28-135/4 Depending on your taste, this lens might seem to you as awkwardly big & heavy, or as being just right. With its large front element (77mm filter) flare can easily become a problem if you are not careful with it. This lens exhibits good optical quality throughout its zoom range and if you can get used to carrying it around, it might become your favorite all-purpose zoom.

35-105mm

A35-105/3.5 zoom will give you an extra ½ stop of light than the A28-135/4, and its light weight and good build makes it a good alternative to A28-135/4. There are some distortions at both ends of its range, but A35-105/3.5 is sharper than the FA28-70/4 AL.

35-135mm

A35-135/3.5-4.5 This lens is a lot lighter than A28-135/4. It received very unfavorable reviews by the list members and should be avoided. So is its successor, the F35-135/3.5-4.5, which has the same optical design.

75-150mm

M75-150/4 is a very good performer, very sharp, not prone to flare (with a build in hood) and handles very well.

70-210mm

FA 70-200/4-5.6 should be avoided. While the resolution is not the worst, the color rendition, contrast, flare, and build quality are really bad.

F70-210/4-5.6 is optically a great performer. With its excellent sharpness and contrast, it's much better than the SMC-FA70-200/4-5.6 and the SMC-F80-200. The "ringer" is the similar looking Pentax-F 70-200/4-5.6, which was mentioned as a "nice" and sharp lens, but not AS good as the SMC-F, and kind of confusing in nomenclature. In the USA this NON-SMC lens was sold as "Takumar-F" and in the rest of the world as "Pentax-F".

SMC-A 70-210/4 is a very good lens with constant aperture. It features push-pull zoom and focusing ring and build in hood. Build quality as well as the optical quality is very good. As with many other push-pull zooms, zooming ring's creep has been reported for the majority of samples.

80-200mm

M80-200/4.5 zoom has two models that are different optically. The earlier and lighter version is said to be very sharp and contrasty (maybe even better than the M200/4).

F80-200/4.5-5.6 is light, quite sharp, and is reported to be slightly better optically than the F and FA 100-300 zooms.

FA*80-200/2.8 AL(IF) is an outstanding lens

80-320mm

FA80-320/4.5-5.6 is somewhat superior to the Pentax 100-300/4-5.6 zooms. It features slightly better optical performance and lack of power zoom. It gets a little soft at the long end. Also, as Roberto mentioned, "try to get a matching hood (58 mm). Forget about the one suggested by Pentax. It's a "normal" hood also supplied for the 80 mm "normal" for the 645 system. When installed on the 80/320 and zoomed all the way to 320... well, it makes everyone look at you funny, because the damn thing looks like a toilet plunger.

100-300mm

F100-300/4-5.6 is not build very well, not does it feature good optical design.

FA100-300/4-5.6 is identical to the F version, both in terms of build and optical design. In addition, it features power zoom that can only be used on some of the PZ-series bodies. It's been suggested that you might want to consider the newer FA80-320 if you are considering a zoom lens in this range.

135-600mm

Pentax 135-600/6.7, as David S. has reported, is not as sharp as A*300/2.8 with the 2XL converter and doesn't balance well on the tripod because of the position of the tripod mount.

SMC-F 50/2.8 Macro	Perfect
SMC-F 50/1.4	Perfect
SMC-A 85/1.4	Perfect
SMC-F 50/1.7	Great
SMC-F 100/2.8 Macro	Great
SMC-A 135/1.8	Great
SMC-A Macro 200/4 ED	Great
SMC-FA 50/1.4	Great
SMC-A□ 50/2	Great
SMC-FA 300/4.5 ED IF	Great
SMC-F 300/4.5 IF ED	Excellent
SMC-FA Macro 100/2.8	Excellent
SMC-FA 28/2.8 AL	Excellent
SMC-A 200/2.8 ED	Excellent
SMC-FA 20/2.8	Excellent
SMC-FA 24/2 AL (IF)	Excellent
SMC-F 135/2.8 IF	Excellent
SMC-F 70-210/4-5.6	Very good
SMC-F 28-80/3.5-4.5	Very good
SMC-FA 28-70/4 AL	Very good
SMC-F 28/2.8	Very good
SMC-FA 28-105/4-5.6	Very good
SMC-F 35-70/3.5-4.5	Very good
SMC-A Pentax 400/5.6	Very good
SMC-FA 400/5.6 ED IF	Very good
SMC-F 70-200/4-5.6	Good
SMC-FA 70-200/4-5.6	Good
SMC-F 35-105/4-5.6	Good
SMC-A 24-50/4	Good
SMC-F Fisheye 17-28/3.5-4.5	Good
SMC-F 24-50/4	Good
SMC-F 35-135/3.5-4.5	Good
SMC-FA 80-320/4.5-5.6	Good
SMC-F 100-300/4.5-5.6	Satisfactory
SMC-FA 28-80/3.5-4.7	Satisfactory
SMC-A 70-200/4	Satisfactory
SMC-A 28-80/3.5-4.5	Satisfactory
SMC-FA 28-200/3.8-5.6 AL IF	Poor