

# Reviews



## LENS ARMOR

Digital cameras have revolutionised photography. They have allowed us to take literally thousands of images a day, without the prohibitive costs of processing film that we would have had only a few years ago. The downside of this, especially for fly fishers, is that our cameras spend a lot more time exposed to the elements. Until recently, the only way we could protect our expensive DSLR cameras was to either cover them with a cloth or put them inside an expensive underwater housing.

I have recently been playing with a relatively new product that bridges this gap very effectively. Camera Armor is a rubber-like, custom designed protective 'skin' which fits over the DSLR body to provide, as I found out, a healthy level of protection from general bumps and bruises and a bit of splash and drizzle. The concept is a pretty basic one - the lens is removed from the camera and the protective 'skin' is put on the body, and the lens is then reattached. Access to all the features of the camera is still possible, with the only slightly noticeable difference being that the buttons covered by the skin need to be pushed a fraction harder, but after a few hours use this is no longer noticeable. The LCD screen is viewable through a protective, clear polycarbonate screen ensuring you can quickly check histograms or change settings as you normally would.

Camera Armor is not going to allow you to start shooting underwater or take macro shots of ordinance testing. Nor should you start swinging the thing about like a club. What it does do is provide a definite improvement in protection against normal wear and tear. It prevents scratching, minimises splashes on the body (although any splash should still be wiped off as part of a good camera care regime).

I recently used mine on an extended offshore trip, where my camera bashed up against fish, coral, rocks and sand, was manhandled by others and generally used to within a few millimetres of the manufacturers guidelines. When I returned home and removed the Camera Armor I expected a mini-landslide of sand and grit, but all I did was wipe the body down as a precautionary measure as I couldn't find any signs of anything that wasn't there before I put it on. While using the camera for two weeks, taking in excess of 3000 images in a tropical environment, my hands never became sweaty from handling the camera for hours at a time. It also had the great benefit for me of increasing the general size of the camera body by a few millimetres, which suited my larger hands, without making it so large that you felt uncomfortable holding the camera.

I do feel it helps me protect my large investment in camera gear and at less than one hundred dollars, it really is exceedingly good value for money. I also tested the Lens Armor, designed to act as a lens hood, on a few smaller lenses as I already use dedicated lens hoods for my longer lenses. They more than adequately fulfilled the basic function of a lens hood, which is to protect the lens. I would suggest making sure the hood doesn't interfere with the correct functioning of the flash on certain lenses if you are going to be using one. It has a nifty little feature called a lens leash that connects your lens cap to the hood, which means you don't need to search for a pocket to put your lens cap in when taking images - just unclip and drop it as it will hang off the Lens Armor.

**Camera Armor make a range of designs to suit different popular camera brands and their various models, including the battery grips of some digital camera bodies. They also come in a range of colours. Ask for them at your local camera store, or visit [www.adeal.com.au](http://www.adeal.com.au).**



### RIO SALTWATER TROPICAL I/I LINE

Over the last few years Rio has continued to refine the coatings and tapers of their Saltwater line series. Past criticism that their lines were too stiff are now unfounded and many of the newer tapers are finding favour with anglers both novice and experienced alike. The Saltwater Tropical I/I (the I/I designating that it is a full-length intermediate line) from the 'Saltwater' series of lines is one of Rio's newer offerings that I've had the opportunity to trial over the last summer.

The coating of the Saltwater I/I has a glassy smooth feel to it which, aided by a lubricant impregnated into the line, really scoots through the guides. The diameter of the running line isn't too thin so it is easily managed and won't blow around on the deck in a breeze. Also, the line doesn't suffer in the least from the aforementioned 'stiffness' yet it is firm enough to not sag in the guides when the deck temperatures start getting uncomfortable. Six months of fishing has passed since I first tried this line and I'm yet to give it more than an occasional clean before use, whether it's a hot summer day or a temperate early morning start.

Though based on Rio's Clouser Taper, a line designed to turn over big clunky flies, the Saltwater is still able to deliver delicate casts with small flies such as Crazy Charlies, making it a great choice as a flats line. The light green tint of the running line and part of the head allows the angler to remain visually aware of where their fly is (sometimes an issue with full length clear lines) while maintaining a level of stealth by having the front nine feet of the head clear. This clear front section effectively gives you an 18 foot clear leader if you tie on the usual 9 foot leader length. Like all the new Rio Saltwater lines this one comes with welded loops at both ends that, despite my best efforts to wreck them on a swag of longtail tuna, are proving to be nigh-on bullet proof. This really is turning out to be a great all-round line from short flats work to busting out the odd long cast for pelagics.

**The Saltwater Tropical I/I line is currently available in weights seven through to twelve from Rio stockists throughout Australia.**

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