

Fujifilm FinePix A500

Overview

by Dan Havlik

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I've said it before, but I'll say it again -- the best place to see how far digital cameras have come in just a few short years is not with the latest top-of-the-line cutting edge products, it's in the low-end budget camera category. That's right, if you want to see the biggest surprises in digital photography, check out what less than \$200 will buy you these days. In the case of Fujifilm's cameras, it's the 5.1-megapixel, 3x optical FinePix A500 which retails for a suggested list price of \$179 but can be found for as low as \$119 at some online retail sites. The A500, which takes standard AA batteries, also has a 1.8-inch LCD screen, selectable light sensitivity of up to ISO 400, four scene modes, and 12MB of internal memory. Better yet for consumers, the A500 is from Fujifilm, a name they can trust to produce images with great color and sharp detail.

Even with all the advances in bargain basement digital cameras in recent years, there are still drawbacks to a camera this inexpensive. (They had to leave something out didn't they?) Whether cost-cutting measures that affect the Fuji A500's performance will bother you depends on how much experience you've had with digital photography so far. If you've spent any time with slightly more sophisticated models, you might be inclined to throw this bare-bones Fujifilm model back. But if it's your first time with a digital camera and you don't want to make a huge investment, the Fuji A500 could be the right catch.

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{tab=specifications}
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Links

Model Name:
Fujifilm FinePix A500

Check Prices:
Check Now!

Photo Gallery URL:
Photo Gallery

Device Forum URL:
Forum

Manufacturer URL:
Mfr. Website

General

Model Number:
A500

Camera Format:
Compact

Currently Manufactured:
Yes

Retail Price:
\$179.00

Street Price:
\$101.16

Date Available:
2006-02-01

Tripod Mount:
Yes

Weight:
173g

6.0oz

Weight With Batteries?
Yes

Size:
93 x 60 x 27 mm

3.7 x 2.4 x 1.1 in

Image Capture

Image Resolution:
2592x1944, 2048x1536, 1600x1200, 640x480

Continuous-mode frames/second:

Movie Resolution:
320x240, 160x120

Movie Frame Rate:
10.00, 10.00

Movie Audio:
No

CCD Sensor (Megapixels):
5.10

CCD Size (inches):
1/2.5

Focal Length Multiplier:
n/a

Lens

Focal Length (35mm equivalent):
38 - 114 mm

Zoom Ratio:
3.00x

Digital Zoom:
Yes

Digital Zoom Values:
3.6x

Auto Focus:
Yes

Auto Focus Assist Light?

Manual Focus:
No

Normal Focus Range:
61 cm to Infinity

24.0 in to Infinity

Macro Focus Range:
10 - 79 cm

3.9 - 31.1 in

Aperture Range:
f/3.3 – f/8.5

Lens Thread:

Lens Thread Type:

Display

Optical Viewfinder:

Yes

LCD Viewfinder:

Yes

LCD Size (inches):

1.8

LCD Resolution (pixels):

77,000

Max Playback Zoom:

Exposure

ISO Settings:

100, 200, 400

White Balance Settings:

Automatic, Preset (Fine, Shade, Fluorescent light (Daylight), Fluorescent light (Warm White), Fluorescent light (Cool White), Incandescent light)

Shutter Speed Range:

2 - 1/500

Exp Adj Range (EV):

+/- 2.0EV in 0.3EV steps

Metering Modes:

Evaluative with 64-zones

Aperture Priority:

No

Shutter Priority:

No

Full Manual Exposure:

No

Self Timer:

2 or 10 seconds

Flash

Internal Flash:
Yes

Flash Modes:
Auto, Red-eye Reduction, Forced Flash, Suppressed Flash, Slow Synchro, Red-eye Reduction + Slow Synchro

Flash Guide Number (Meters):
n/a

Flash Range Description:
2.0 - 10.2 ft (Wide), 2.0 - 6.6 ft (Tele), 1.0 ft - 2.6 ft (Macro)

Ext Flash Connection:
n/a

Image Storage

Usable Memory Types:
xD

Memory Included (MB):
12.0

Uncompressed Format:

CCD Raw Format:
No

Movie File Format:
AVI

Connectivity

Video Out:
Yes

Video Mode (NTSC/PAL):
Yes

Video Usable as Viewfinder:

External Connections:
USB 1.1

Other Connection:
DC Input

Included Software:
FinePixViewer

OS Compatibility:
Windows, MacOS

Power

Battery Form Factor:
2 x AA

Usable Battery Types:
Alkaline disposable, NiMH rechargeable

Batteries Included:
2 x AA Alkaline disposable

Battery Charger Included:
No

Notes & Features:

{tab=performance}

Startup/Shutdown

Power on
to first shot

2.8 seconds

Time it takes for LCD to turn on and lens to deploy

Shutdown

1.6 seconds

How long it takes to retract lens

Buffer clearing time

2 seconds

Worst case buffer clearing time. -- This is the delay after a set of shots before you can remove the card. Some cameras won't retract their lenses and shut down until the buffer is cleared.

Mode switching

Play to Record,
first shot

0.4 seconds

Time until first shot is captured

Record to play

4.6 seconds

Time to display a large/fine file immediately after capture

Display

recorded image

1.5 second

Time to display a large/fine file already on the memory card.

Shutter response (Lag Time):

Full Autofocus Wide

0.72 second

Time from fully pressing shutter button to image capture, zoom lens at wide angle position.

Full Autofocus Tele

0.61 second

Time from fully pressing shutter button to image capture, zoom lens at telephoto position.

Prefocused

0.012 second

Time to capture, after half-pressing and holding shutter button.

Cycle time (shot to shot)

Single Shot mode

Large Fine JPEG

2.24 seconds

Time per shot, averaged over 20 shots. Buffer clears between shots.

Single Shot mode

640x480 JPEG

2.33 seconds

Time per shot, averaged over 20 shots. Buffer clears between shots.

Early shutter

penalty?

No

Some cameras refuse to snap another shot if you release and press the shutter too quickly in Single Shot mode, making "No" the preferred answer

Flash recycling

7 seconds

Flash at maximum output

Download speed

Windows Computer, USB 2.0

656 KBytes/sec

Typical Values:

Less than 600=USB 1.1;

600-770=USB 2.0 Low;

771-4000=USB 2.0 High

The Fujifilm FinePix A500's performance ranges from pretty good to about average, depending on task at hand. Startup time is a little sluggish, but shutter lag is better than average at both wide angle and telephoto lens settings. "Prefocusing" the camera by half-pressing and holding down the shutter button before the final exposure results in a very speedy 0.012 second delay, among the fastest on the market. Shot to shot cycle times are slightly longer than average, at about 2.24 seconds for large/fine JPEGs, for 20 or so shots. (There doesn't appear to be any buffer memory-imposed limit.) The flash takes about seven seconds to recharge after a full-power shot, slightly longer than average, particularly considering its anemic output. Connected to a computer, download speeds aren't bad (you probably won't feel a need for an external card reader), but are slower than those of many current cameras. Bottom line, while the A500 isn't suited for action photography, it should handle average landscape and portrait shots just fine.

Battery and Storage Capacity

Battery

Poor battery life with average alkaline cells, much better with rechargeable NiMH batteries.

Test Conditions Number of Shots

AA Alkaline Batteries

100

AA NiMH Rechargeable Batteries

400

The Fujifilm FinePix A500 uses two AA-type batteries for power, and a set of ordinary alkaline cells are included with the camera. The table above shows the number of shots the camera is capable of, based on CIPA battery-life and/or

manufacturer standard test conditions. Given the short runtime with the alkaline cells, and only moderate runtime with NiMH cells, we strongly recommend that you purchase a couple of sets of high-capacity NiMH rechargeable batteries and a good-quality charger, as they'll save you many times their cost over the life of the camera.

Storage

No card is included with the Fujifilm FinePix A500, although it accepts xD-Picture cards; approximately 12 MB RAM is built into the camera.

Image Capacity with

12MB Internal Memory

Fine
Normal

2,592 x 1,944

Images

4

9

File Size

2.5 MB

1.3 MB

2,048 x 1,536

Images

-

15

File Size

-

796 KB

1,600 x 1,200

Images

-

19

File Size

-

626 KB

640 x 480

Images

-

93

File Size

-

123 KB

We strongly recommend buying at least a 128MB card, preferably a 256MB one, to give yourself extra space for extended outings.

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