

Nikon AF-S VR Nikkor 70-200mm 1:2.8G review

Andy Westlake, May 2008



Nikon first announced the development of the AF-S VR Nikkor 70-200mm f/2.8G ED-IF in February 2002, with the lens becoming available to buy in April 2003. Billed by Nikon as a 'compact, lightweight' fast telephoto, the lens features a complex optical design of 21 elements in 15 groups, including no fewer than 5 Extra-low Dispersion (ED) elements for the correction of aberrations. It improves on its predecessor, the AF-S 80-200mm f/2.8G, mainly by incorporating an optical image stabilisation unit (or in Nikon speak, 'vibration reduction'), allowing hand holding at shutter speeds up to three stops lower than normal without image degradation due to camera shake.

The 70-200mm f/2.8 class of fast telephoto zoom is (along with the fast standard zoom) one of the key workhorse lenses for the working photographer, and is used for a huge range of applications. From weddings and portraits, though events and journalism, to sports and wildlife, this lens will be a mainstay of many a professional, and therefore needs to perform impeccably across almost every imaginable situation. And naturally this lens is not just the preserve of working pros; keen (and well-heeled) amateurs will also value the flexibility and sheer optical quality promised by a top notch fast telezoom.

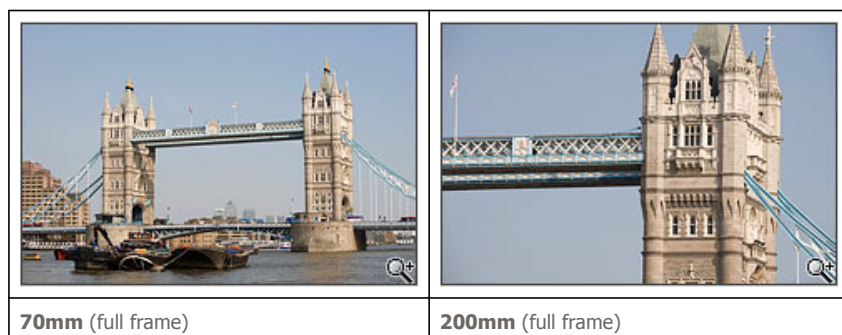
Of course back in 2002, Nikon were riding the crest of a wave due to the success of the revolutionary D1, the first 'affordable' DSLR (at least for money-making professionals) which kick-started the seismic shift from film to digital, and introduced the world to the new 'DX' sensor size standard. The AF-S VR 70-200mm F2.8 therefore aimed to provide professional photographers with a lens whose imaging qualities were optimally matched to the new demands of digital imaging and the DX sensor, whilst adding the highly desirable features in ultrasonic focusing and image stabilization. Fast forward six years and the situation is not entirely dissimilar; Nikon are again arguably top dogs in the high end DSLR market, with their D3/D300 double act, but have now re-introduced their users to an old favourite format in FX (that's full-frame 35mm, in anyone else's language). This has refocused attention on the lens lineup, and especially those models introduced since Nikon shooters last used the 35mm format *en masse* with the F5 film body. So does the 70-200mm f/2.8 VR stand up to this latest examination of its abilities?

Headline features

- 70-200mm focal length range; fast f/2.8 constant maximum aperture
- Optical image stabilization – 3 stops with automatic panning detection and 'active' mode
- Ring-type ultrasonic focusing with full-time manual override
- F mount for Nikon and Fuji DX and FX format DSLRS

Angle of view

The pictures below illustrate the focal length range from wide to telephoto, on FX (35mm full-frame) and DX (APS-C) camera bodies:



**70mm** (DX; 105mm equivalent)**200mm** (DX; 300mm equivalent)

Nikon AF-S VR-Nikkor 70-200mm 1:2.8G specifications

Street price	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • US: \$1700 • UK: £1150
Date introduced	April 2003
Maximum format size	35mm full frame
Focal length	70-200mm
35mm equivalent focal length (APS-C)	105-300mm
Diagonal Angle of view (FF)	34° - 12°
Diagonal Angle of view (APS-C)	23° - 8°
Maximum aperture	F2.8
Minimum aperture	F22
Lens Construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 21 elements/15 groups • 5 ED elements
Number of diaphragm blades	9, rounded
Minimum focus	1.5m
Maximum magnification	0.16x at 200mm
AF motor type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ring-type ultrasonic • Full-time manual focus
Focus method	Internal
Zoom method	Internal
Image stabilization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 stops • Auto panning detection • Active mode
Filter thread	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 77mm • Does not rotate on focus
Supplied accessories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Front and rear caps • HB-29 Hood • CL-L2 Soft Case
Optional accessories	
Weight	1470g (51.8 oz)
Dimensions	87mm diameter x 215mm length (3.4 x 8.5 in)
Lens Mount	Nikon F only
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dust and moisture sealing • Reports focus distance information to camera body • Three AF stop buttons

* Supplied accessories may differ in each country or area

Foreword / notes

If you're new to digital photography you may wish to read some of our [Digital Photography Glossary](#) before diving into this article (it may help you understand some of the terms used).

Conclusion / recommendation / ratings are based on the opinion of the author, we recommend that you read the entire review before making any decision. Images which can be viewed at a larger size have a small magnifying glass icon in the bottom right corner of them, click to display a larger image in a new window.

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Dpreview use calibrated monitors at the PC normal gamma 2.2, this means that on our monitors we can make out the difference between all of the grayscale blocks below. We recommend to make the most of this review you should be able to see the difference (at least) between X,Y and Z and ideally also A, B and C.

