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Canon PowerShot A640

http://reviews.cnet.com/4505-6501_7-32072675.html

At a glance

- **Release date:** September 15, 2006
- **Editors' rating:** 7.6 Very good
- **The good:** Lots of manual controls; flip-out LCD; accepts accessory lenses.
- **The bad:** Noisy at ISO 800; no image stabilization.
- **The bottom line:** It's not great in low light, but the A640 has plenty of features photographers will love.

CNET editor's review

Reviewed by ; Will Greenwald

Edited by ; Lori Grunin

Reviewed September 28, 2006

With lots of manual settings and a reasonably low price tag, Canon's PowerShot A640 looks quite appealing. Though it lacks the flexibility of higher-end cameras and the stylish portability of more compact shooters, the 10-megapixel PowerShot A640 is a smart, full-featured camera with some surprising benefits.

The A640's most striking feature is its pivoting 2.5-inch LCD. You can flip and twist it to help frame odd-angled shots or fold it against the camera for a more traditional feel. It's a handy feature, as the screen can tilt up for shooting at chest level, tilt down for shooting over crowds, or even flip all the way around for taking self-portraits. Canon has equipped several of its cameras with this type of pivoting screen, including the A640's lower-end versions, the A630 and A620. The flip-out screen has also been seen in many of Canon's high-end, sub-SLR cameras such as the PowerShot G6 and S3 IS. Curiously, the latest iteration of the PowerShot G series, the G7, lacks the pivoting display. If the display isn't

sufficient, the A640 also has a standard optical viewfinder for framing shots the old-fashioned way.

Besides its flip-out screen, the A640 looks like a fairly typical midsize point-and-shoot camera. At 1.7 inches thick and weighing 12 ounces, the A640 is a bit too bulky to just slide into a pocket, but it's perfect for a bag or a jacket. It runs on four AA batteries that fit into a grip on the right side of the camera, giving it a slightly more pronounced curve than most cameras of its shape. The controls are a standard but comfortably placed combination of mode dial, control pad, zoom rocker, and extraneous buttons. The various buttons feel reasonably responsive and easy to find with the thumb, though the tiny record/playback toggle switch's flat shape makes it awkward to manipulate.

The A640 is loaded with features that should please more-advanced photographers. Besides the standard automatic and scene preset modes, the camera offers full PASM controls, giving users the option of completely manual shooting. The camera uses a modest 35mm-to-140mm-equivalent lens, giving it a bit more zoom than standard 3X shooters. If the 4X lens isn't enough, the camera accepts additional accessory lenses. Canon currently offers directly from its site a wide-angle converter lens for \$200 and a zoom-boosting telephoto converter lens for \$150. We noticed some fairly quick performance in the A640 hindered only by a disappointingly slow burst mode. After a 1.5-second power-up cycle, we managed to take a shot every 1.7 seconds in bright light and once every 2.4 seconds with the flash enabled. Shutter lag was pleasantly low, clocking in at less than 0.5 second between hitting the shutter release and the shot being taken. Unfortunately, the 10-megapixel shooter's burst mode was disappointing; we could shoot only 44 shots over a 34.5-second period, giving us a sluggish frame rate of 1.3 shots per second. In fairness, the camera's high resolution was probably the biggest factor in the slow burst rate; processing 10-megapixel shots takes more time than for 7-megapixel shots.

Photos shot at low ISO settings are sharp enough to print well beyond 8x10, though the camera tends to blow out highlights. Noise starts to appear at ISO 200 but remains a steady and unobtrusive grain up to ISO 400. At ISO 800, however, the noise develops a bit of a sparkly, speckled quality beyond the normal grain. Between the noise and the camera's lack of an image stabilization mode, the A640 isn't the best choice for low-light or high-speed shots.

Beyond the low-light issues, the A640's photos were crisp and detailed. We noticed little fringing or distortion, and fine details showed up quite clearly, especially in the lower ISO settings. Colors tended to appear slightly muted and cool, but otherwise images were very attractive.



A shot taken at ISO 800 with the A640 (top) compared to one shot with the A710 IS (bottom). As you'd expect, the 10-megapixel A640 has the worst noise profile of all the A-series cameras.

Unfortunately, the A640 preserves the PowerShot's history of less-than-stellar low-light shooting. Otherwise, the Canon PowerShot A640 is a great camera for users who want a solid point-and-shoot with photographer-friendly manual capabilities. If you like the A640's feature set but don't want to spend quite so much for the resolution, you might want to consider the camera's 8-megapixel but otherwise identical little brother, the A630.

Shooting speed

(Shorter bars indicate better performance)

■ Typical shot-to-shot time ■ Time to first shot ■ Shutter lag (typical)

Casio Exilim EX-Z1000



3.5



Canon PowerShot A640



Nikon Coolpix P3



Note: In seconds

Typical continuous-shooting speed

(Longer bars indicate better performance)

Nikon Coolpix P3



Canon PowerShot A640



Casio Exilim EX-Z1000



Note: Frames per second

User comments

Average user rating

Excellent

8.0

out of 10

Average user rating: from 9 users

User rating

Spectacular

9

out of 10

Excellent all-around camera

by Tookie Tookie - January 18, 2007

Pros:

Great color, lots of detail, fast performance

Cons:
No image stabilization

9 out of 9 users found this user opinion helpful.

User rating
Spectacular

9
out of 10

Great Camera and Value with amzaing Detail and Great Features.

by Zippoty75 - September 27, 2006

Pros:
Loads of Features that are very functional

Cons:
Adjusting Settings takes some time because there are so many features.

7 out of 7 users found this user opinion helpful.

User rating
Spectacular

9
out of 10

Excellent performer, advanced features, best of all worlds

by mgironda - November 25, 2006

Pros:
10 megapixel in small package, large 2.5" swing-out screen, lots of manual settings if desired, great looking bezel, easily replaced AA batteries in a pinch

Cons:
A little on the heavy side with a set of extra batteries (takes 4), no IS

4 out of 4 users found this user opinion helpful.

User rating
Spectacular

9
out of 10

Excellent digital camera. Shoot multiple photos without long shutter lag.

by ElizeFourie - December 17, 2006

Pros:
Excellent clear pictures in low light (not direct sunlight)

Cons:

Have to be carefull in direct sunlight (over exposure) and night shots (loss of detail)

3 out of **4** users found this user opinion helpful.

User rating

Very good

7

out of 10

Great Camera with inexplicable missing feature

by Mike.Willis - December 8, 2006

Pros:

Image quality, battery availablity, big articulating screen

Cons:

no date/time stamp

3 out of **4** users found this user opinion helpful.

1 comment posted to this opinion.

User rating

Spectacular

9

out of 10

excellent digital camera, worth the price

by electrosmack1 - January 8, 2007

Pros:

10 MP's, high quality, sturdy build and flip LCD.

Cons:

at highest zoom, x16, digital zoom is unusable.

1 out of **1** users found this user opinion helpful.

User rating

Excellent

8

out of 10

Really excellent camera

by jockwav - November 28, 2006

Pros:

great colours,simple to use in auto mode

Cons:

the battery compartment is a bit fiddly

1 out of **1** users found this user opinion helpful.

User rating

Excellent

8

out of 10

Good value for money, once you learn how to use it

by andrew_warrington - April 6, 2007

Pros:

Manual settings, ability to program, high resolution, speed

Cons:

Tendency to blur images even outdoors, colours are less vivid than expected, long learning curve

User rating

Mediocre

4

out of 10

VERY hard to use!

by 510nick - January 13, 2007

Pros:

flip out screen

Cons:

Very bad focus at AUTO mode

0 out of **3** users found this user opinion helpful.

3 comments posted to this opinion.

Basic specs for Canon PowerShot A640

Video input type-- **Digital camera**

Digital zoom-- **4 x**

Effective sensor resolution-- **10,000,000 pixels**

Gross sensor resolution-- **10,400,000 pixels**

Optical sensor size-- **1/1.8 in**

Optical sensor type-- **CCD**

Light sensitivity-- **ISO 80, ISO 100, ISO 200, ISO 400, ISO 800, ISO auto**

Still image format-- **JPEG**

Lens aperture-- **F/2.8-4.1**

Optical zoom-- **4 x**

Flash type-- **Built-in flash**

Exposure metering-- **Spot, Evaluative, Center-weighted**

Exposure compensation-- **±2 EV range, in 1/3 EV steps**

Flash memory-- **32 MB**

Display type-- **LCD display - TFT active matrix - 2.5 in - Color**

Weight-- **8.6 oz**

▶ [See complete specs](#)

Buying choices

for the Canon PowerShot A640

[Buydig.com](#)

[\\$301.00](#) | In stock: Yes

[Beach Camera](#)

[\\$301.00](#) | In stock: Yes

[CompUSA](#)

[\\$349.99](#) | In stock: Yes

▶ [See prices from all 23 stores](#)

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