

Top of the glass

Steiner Optik's LRF 1700 10x30 laser range-finding binoculars

by Con Kapralos



10-power magnification with 30mm objective lens diameters. Its overall dimensions of 165mm wide by 140mm high by 69mm deep and weight of 785 grams make for a very light but compact set of binoculars. Externally, the body of the LRF 1700 is made from ultra-tough polycarbonate Makrolon which is designed to withstand 11G (shock) of impact as well as a Floating Prism System that utilises flexible silicon to absorb severe shock, impact and abuse while protecting the internal glass prisms.

The body of the binoculars proper is covered with Steiner Optik's No-Noise and Comfort Use elements, which are optimised for silent and intuitive operation. Nitrile rubber armouring, particularly on the protruding operating elements, ensures effective sound absorption as well as positive grip characteristics, whether it be with gloves or bare hands.

The ocular and objective lenses also received some special protective treatment from the Steiner Optik design team. The objective lenses have protective rubber caps which are semi-permanently hinged at the bottom. Uncovering the two objective lenses is easy, but having the protective rubber caps there ready for use is welcoming. The protective caps can be simple to detach from the body of the binoculars if required but during testing I never found the need to take them off. The oculars also have a protective rubber 'boot' which sits over the two lenses to keep dust and dirt out while in storage but can be effortlessly removed prior to use.

The two eyecups are made from ErgoFlex silicone, which is non-irritating and non-ageing and provides a naturally comfortable feel on the eyes. The eyecups can furthermore be adjusted three-ways to suit the requirements of the user, especially

For the avid hunter wanting affordable but quality laser range-finding binoculars the choice used to be pretty sparse, to say the least.

While laser range-finding monoculars are highly popular and extremely affordable these days, their binocular equivalent consists of some very ordinary units and then the premium makes from Europe. Top offerings from Europe's big three optics manufacturers mean taking out a small mortgage, with these laser range-finding binoculars starting out at \$3500 and heading north!

Thankfully the Research and Development teams at Steiner Optik decided the time was right to enter the fold and designed their own array of laser range-finding binoculars which are not only technically brilliant, but within budgetary reach of the average, avid hunter. Enter the Steiner Optik LRF 1700 series.

The Steiner Optik LRF 1700 laser range-finding binoculars are offered in two models

- the 8x30 and 10x30. After speaking with Steiner Optik Product Manager Edward Tunbridge at a SSAA SHOT Expo he duly sent me a demonstration LRF 1700 in the 10x30 specification. I had previously only used and reviewed Steiner Optik binoculars in the Ranger category. I was instantly impressed by the Steiner Optik LRF 1700's unique design features and certain they'd be simple to use and ergonomically excellent.

The Steiner Optik LRF 1700 10x30

The binoculars arrived in a black carry case, devoid of any packaging carton, as it was a company demonstration model but had the user manuals supplied within the case as well as a small cleaning cloth. It is highly recommended that purchasers of the LRF 1700 binoculars first read the user manuals before operating. Instructions are easy to read and give an excellent introduction to the binoculars' functions and features.

Looking at the unit sent for review more closely, the 10x30 specification entails a

if they wear glasses. Two anchoring points either side of the oculars will accept the ClicLoc neoprene carrying strap provided with the binoculars.

Physical attributes aside, the external operational layout and features of the Steiner Optik LRF 1700 10x30 really gives the well-known 'high-end' varieties a serious run for their money. The Steiner Optik LRF 1700 is very simple to set up and use – without any confusion. Operational buttons are laid out where they should be and the focusing system is Steiner Optik brilliance. To focus the LRF 1700, each ocular has the Sports Auto-Focus System, where each eyepiece is focused to your vision once (at 20 metres) as well as being able to adjust the inter-pupillary distance between the two oculars. Once the eyepieces have been focused, the image remains razor sharp from 20m to infinity so there is no need to re-focus once set.

The two operational buttons on the right part of the binoculars' body consist of the 'ranging' button (rear-most button with 'triangle' symbol on it) and 'mode' button just forward of the ranging button. The Steiner Optik LRF 1700 are range-finding binoculars without any bells and whistles in that they offer ranging out to 1700m (or yards) and do not bother with any ballistic hold-over information or shooting angle compensation. Simply set up the Sports Auto-Focus System to your eyes, select either 'yards' or 'metres' and 'single measurement' or 'scan' with the Mode button and range away. Easy!

No computer degree is needed and



A well-appointed carry case accompanies the Steiner Optik LRF 1700.

complicated ballistic information can be left to the others. The front of the binoculars contains the compartment which houses a single CR2 battery that's easy to remove and replace by hand. No special tools needed here. Adjacent to the battery compartment is the laser range-finding window to which the Class- I laser utilises for ranging the targets.

Internally, optical quality is top-class, as you would expect in Steiner Optik binoculars. Precision ground lenses and prisms provide an ultra-clear, razor sharp image in full contact with maximum resolution from edge to edge. Highly specialised coatings patented by Steiner Optik provide first-class light transmission, with diffused light being kept to a minimum, with contours always sharp and distinctly visible. In layman's terms, using the binoculars in all manner of light conditions verified the manufacturer's claims of optical quality, something which I would have never doubted. Internal lenses and electronic circuitry are protected by the use of quality seals and nitrogen purging and filling.

This, together with the Steiner Optik Nano-Protection hydrophobic lens coatings, ensures that the LRF 1700 is totally water-proof up to 5m and from temperatures of

-40C to +80C, the intake of moisture and dust will never compromise image quality. The Nano-Protection coatings also ensure that exterior lenses remain free of moisture and that dust, dirt, snow are repelled without difficulty for easier cleaning and a clear view. Optically, the 10x30 specification has a field of view of 108m at 1000m, with a twilight factor of 17.3 and an exit pupil of 3mm.

In the field

Facts, figures and technical information may well be all good but the real test of any optical equipment is to take it out into the field and see how it performs in all manner of light conditions. The binoculars were kept busy over a three-day goat hunt in the Flinders Ranges in South Australia. With the open expanses of the countryside, they were put to good use, ranging both animate and inanimate targets out to 1700m. All measurements were extremely repeatable and the Sports Auto-Focus system was most welcome. There was no need to constantly re-focus and the optical clarity at dawn, dusk and during the day was superb.

The Steiner Optik LRF 1700 laser range-finding binoculars in 10x30 provide an excellent optic for the hunter looking for a unit that will do what they want without all the unnecessary ballistic information overload. Just adjust the Sports Auto-Focus to your eyesight, set your mode to 'single-measurement' or 'scan' – and range away.

It was refreshing to be able to use laser range-finding binoculars with a minimum of fuss but could range out to 1700m and offer repeatable measurements in the process. Optically, they are on-par with their more expensive European counterparts and were a joy to function in the field setting. Available in the 8x30 and the 10x30, they retail for \$2650 and \$2690 respectively. For more information on the Steiner Optik LRF 1700 laser range-finding binoculars, visit the Beretta Australia website at berettaaustralia.com.au or ask your sport optics retailer. ■



The Steiner Optik LRF 1700 is supplied with easy to read user manuals as well as a small cleaning cloth.