

Binocular Sky Review: Fotomate VT-2900 Tripod

Manufacturer's Specification

Max Payload	8 kg
Optimal Payload	4-6 kg
Min Height	82 cm
Max Height	177 cm
Head	2-way, fluid damped, adjustable tension, lockable
Forward Tilt	-65°
Max Elevation	+90°
QR Plate	¼ & ⅜ + video pin
Pan Handle	L or R mounting
Centre column	Geared, adjustable tension, lockable
Legs	29 mm diam, 3-section
Leg-locks	Twist
Feet	Rubber, non-slip
Weight	4.79 kg
Bubble Level	Yes
Case	Nylon



Price: ~~£149~~ £125

Available from: [First Light Optics](#)

Initial Impressions

The **Fotomate VT-2900 Extra Heavy-Duty Semi-Professional 2-Way Tripod** has tubular legs, with fixed-length spreaders attached to a central column. The leg locks and centre-column locks are of the twist type (rubber-covered on the leg locks). The 2-way fluid head is on a geared column; the tension on this is adjustable by twisting the outer tube of the centre column. The plastic crank that raises the column looks flimsy, but is identical to that on a Cobra photographic tripod that has survived the abuse I've been giving it for about 25 years, so I suspect that looks are deceiving in this case.

The handle can be attached to either side of the tripod and is fully adjustable, so you can find the ideal position for it.



The quick-release plate has a matte finish which causes it to bind slightly when it is being inserted or removed. It has a safety latch to prevent it falling out accidentally if the tightening bolt is left too loose. It is equipped with standard $\frac{1}{4}$ " and $\frac{3}{8}$ " Whitworth bolts (slotted for a coin to tighten them) and a video pin.

Testing in the Field

All testing was done with a *United Optics BA8 15x70* (2.4kg) and a *Strathspey* adaptor bracket.

The tripod easily held the weight of the binocular and, when it was given a firm tap, the shiver-like vibrations subsided within one and a half seconds. There is increasing resistance in the head as it is moved away from the horizontal. With the QR plate as far back as possible in the head, an ideal position for binoculars especially for high-elevation targets, this increasing tension compensated perfectly for the increased turning moment from the weight of the binoculars, making it unnecessary to increase the altitude tension for higher elevations. Once the tensions were adjusted to the optimal amount, movement in azimuth and altitude were both extremely smooth with this tripod.



With the centre-column fully extended, the eyepiece height was 182 cm (my eye-height is 165 cm), falling to 161 cm when the binocular was pointed vertically. I found that I could observe comfortably to about 60° and, at a push up to about 75° (measured with a Wixey angle gauge), but this was not comfortable. And was not sustainable for anything but quick views; if you wish to observe higher than this, you will need a chair or recliner.



Conclusions

The tripod carried these binoculars with ease and would be adequate for at least the low end of the specified optimal payload and probably more. It is much more stable than, for example, the popular [Horizon 8115 tripod](#), and also has the advantage that it has a higher angle of elevation, so the head need not be reversed for astronomical use with straight-through binoculars (i.e. without angled eyepieces).

[Click here](#) to see the **Fotomate VT-2900 Extra Heavy-Duty Semi-Professional 2-Way Tripod** on

[First Light Optics](#) website

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