



Review: Black Rapid RS-4 Camera Strap

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I was skeptical about this one - I have to admit it. I already have a camera strap that I really like. It has great padding and little pockets where I can keep a couple of extra memory cards, so why do I need the Black Rapid RS-4? But I'm game. I said I'd try it out, and write up a review if I liked it. If not, I'd just send it back. Well, I was wrong. This thing is great!



JAY PATEL PHOTOGRAPHY

First off, it has a pocket. So what? My old one has two pockets. Well, the pockets on my other strap are just the right size for my memory cards. Which is great - if that's the only thing you plan to put in there. They're too small to fit anything else. The Black Rapid has one slightly larger pocket with a small zipper - it'll fit a couple of memory cards or you can do what I did. I usually use a tripod so my camera has a quick-release bracket screwed into the bottom. Rather than risk losing the bracket, I put it in the pocket along with its easy-to-lose screw, and my allen wrench. When I want to switch back to my tripod mount, I know exactly where those small parts are. No fishing around in the bottom of my camera bag trying to find them. That may not seem like a big deal, but if you are primarily a tripod-shooter, it means a lot. The pocket was just large enough to fit a spare memory card in there too. Nice!

The other thing that was pretty important to me was the ease with which I could attach or remove the Black Rapid. When I'm shooting wide-angle landscapes, I almost always use a tripod and I nearly always use it for close-up and detail work as well. But the Black Rapid strap screws into the tripod mount on the bottom of the camera. It is meant specifically for those who hand-hold their cameras. Since the tripod quick-release needs to be securely screwed into the base of my camera, I'm not likely to remove it unless there's a darn good reason to do so. I guess I just found my reason.



It took me less than 10 seconds to remove my bracket and attach the Black Rapid strap firmly to my camera. The swiveling clip makes it easy to screw in and a rubber gasket provides a strong grip while also protecting the base of the camera. It's secure enough that I felt completely comfortable letting go of the camera to let it hang at my waist.

Now, the idea here is to be able to carry the camera comfortably while leaving your hands free - and to be able to grab the camera at a moment's notice and pull it up to shooting position. At first, I thought the shoulder pad would slip off my shoulder and I'd end up fiddling with it all the time. That didn't happen. In fact, the shoulder pad stayed right where I put it. If it did slip, it would take nothing beyond a quick tug to set it right again. But the little clip slides so smoothly that I didn't have any problems at all.

The strap is also easy to adjust. A couple of locking clips keep the camera from sliding beyond the range you're comfortable with and the strap adjusts to fit any body type. The shoulder pad is comfortable and its position helps balance the weight of a heavy lens.

I didn't think I'd be interested in keeping the Black Rapid but I'll be using it regularly - whenever I'm not using a tripod. It's perfect for photographing the kids playing soccer, for shooting a wedding, for detail photography when you are using a flash, for bird and wildlife photography, or for shooting in-studio. I'm looking forward to having both hands free when I need them!

The [Black Rapid RS-4 camera strap](#) and other [Black Rapid products](#) are available at the [NPN/OPG Store](#).

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Varina Patel, with her husband Jay, are professional nature photographers and frequent contributors here at NPN. To see more of Varina's fabulous work, visit her website at photographybyvarina.com.



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