

Our experts review the latest kit

FIRST LIGHT

Sky-Watcher Heritage 150P Flextube Dobsonian

A simple to set up, portable scope that delivers a decent range of views

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VITAL STATS

- **Price** £219
- **Optics** 150mm (6-inch) parabolic mirror
- **Focal length** 750mm (f/5)
- **Mount** Single-arm, wooden altazimuth Dobsonian mount
- **Focuser** Rack and pinion
- **Extras** red dot finder, 1.25-inch 10mm and 25mm eyepieces
- **Weight** 7.5kg
- **Supplier** Optical Vision Limited
- **Tel** 01359 244200
- **www.** opticalvision.co.uk

Since the introduction of the Heritage 76 in 2009, Sky-Watcher's tabletop Dobsonian telescopes have offered an affordable way for anyone to explore the wonders of the Universe. The Heritage 150P Flextube has now been added to the series, to deliver a greater light-gathering capacity than the previous largest in the range, the Heritage 130 – increasing it by 33 per cent.

The Heritage 150P comes preassembled in an attractive presentation box, with smaller boxes for the eyepieces and red dot finder. The latter needs a screwdriver to attach it to the telescope, but once that's done there's no need to take it off again. The Flextube design allows the front end of the telescope, to extend on two struts. Then, after use, the front end neatly slides back into the lower half of the tube, making it very compact and convenient to store.

The front end of the telescope houses the secondary mirror, a helical focuser and a place to attach the finderscope. There's also a dust cap to protect the scope's optics. Two eyepieces are

provided, 25mm and 10mm, giving magnifications of 30x and 75x respectively. The red dot finder works well and has adjustable brightness, a useful feature which means it doesn't overpower the view at the lowest setting.

Adjusts with ease

The mount is a single-arm tabletop Dobsonian and is very easy to operate, with free movement on both the azimuth and altitude axis. The altitude axis is tensioned using a large knob, so you can balance the tube assembly and give enough free movement to adjust the tube with just your finger.

The tube is attached by a Vixen-style clamp and there's enough length on the mounting bar to achieve good balance. One minor niggle with is that you can't rotate the tube to position the focuser and eyepiece into a better position. Unless you use a low table, you may find you have to stretch over the telescope to reach the eyepiece.

We took a tour of the best summer Milky Way targets, beginning low down in the northeast with

Lightweight and portable design

Sky-Watcher's range of Heritage telescopes are designed to be highly portable and uncomplicated to set up, ideally on a tabletop where they can be placed so the eyepiece is accessible. Being so quick and easy to use, you can be stargazing in minutes, without the setup hassles of a more complicated system such as an equatorial mount.

At just 7.5kg, the Heritage 150P Flextube is relatively lightweight, so it can be brought out quickly to catch those elusive gaps in the clouds, or whisked away easily to a dark-sky site. We put this to the test when Comet NEOWISE was at its best earlier this year, but wasn't viewable from our garden. Collapsed down, the Heritage 150P was easily transported in the car and then set up quickly in a dead-end road away from any streetlights. With it we were able to enjoy impressive views of the comet, making out the detail of the dust tail emerging from the coma. This goes to show that its compact design will appeal to anyone who wants a hassle-free get-up-and-go visual system.



Focuser

The focuser is a helical style and takes 1.25-inch fit eyepieces. There was some play when rotating in and out of focus, but generally it did the job intended. Two thumbscrews keep the eyepiece in place and are also useful when rotating for focus.

SCALE



Finder

The supplied red dot finder is a suitable choice for this size of telescope as it's simple to use and lightweight so as to not overbalance the scope. The brightness of the red dot can be adjusted; we found the dimmest setting did not overpower the view and could still be seen.



Mount

The single-arm altaz mount provides 360° movement in azimuth, while the altitude axis movement is smooth and adjusted with a nice chunky knob at the side. The telescope is attached to the mount with a Vixen-style bar and can be adjusted easily for balance.



Eyepieces

Two basic eyepieces with rubber eyecups are supplied, a 25mm (with 30x magnification) and a 10mm for higher magnification (75x). They worked well for this focal system and gave pleasing views of a wide range of celestial targets. The setup could be enhanced further with a 2x Barlow lens.



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KIT TO ADD

1. Sky-Watcher x2 deluxe Barlow lens (1.25-inch)
2. Sky-Watcher dual-LED night vision torch
3. Optical Vision Ltd 1.25-inch light pollution filter

► the Double Cluster in Perseus, using the 25mm eyepiece. It sparkled against the light sky and stood out well. The 10mm eyepiece allowed closer examination of each of the clusters, revealing several of the orange stars scattered throughout them. We picked out the clusters M34, M103 and, higher up, M52, before swinging over to view Albireo, the best double star the summer night

sky has to offer. Although it was split well with the 25mm eyepiece, we found the colours showed more vivid sky blue and golden orange with the 10mm. Indeed, by using the 10mm we could split the famous Double Double star Epsilon Lyrae.

Nice nebulae

After viewing the hollow ring-like structure of the Ring Nebula, M57, in Lyra with the 10mm eyepiece, we moved down to the Dumbbell Nebula, M27, which was a lovely sight with a well-defined shape. We also spotted the Swan Nebula, M17, and viewed the hazy nature of the Sagittarius Star Cloud, M24, among a wealth of targets in this part of the sky.

Moving on to the planets, we found that Jupiter displayed its banded nature and all four Galilean moons were easily seen with the 25mm and 10mm eyepieces. Saturn's rings were obvious in the 25mm eyepiece, while there was a hint of the Cassini Division in moments of good seeing conditions with the 10mm. Its moons, Titan and Rhea, were also spotted to add to the fun. Meanwhile, the Moon provided lots of detail – the Heritage 150P will keep you happy exploring its surface details for many nights.

Although it's not a photographic instrument, we were able to image the Moon by connecting our smartphone, an iPhone XR, via our own adaptor, which was an added bonus.

Overall, this is a nice grab-and-go setup, a simple to use tabletop Dobsonian that can fire the imagination and provide decent views of a wide range of targets. 🌌

A slightly cropped image of the Moon, taken with an iPhone XR and smartphone adaptor connected to the Sky-Watcher Heritage 150P and its 10mm eyepiece

Optics

The 150mm (6-inch) parabolic mirror has a relatively short or 'fast' focal length of just 750mm, giving the system a focal ratio of f/5. Given its size, the optics performed well and provided a satisfactory range of views, from lunar and planetary, to brighter deep-sky targets and Comet NEOWISE.



VERDICT

Assembly	★★★★★
Build & Design	★★★★★
Ease of use	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Optics	★★★★★
OVERALL	★★★★★