



While many portable MP3 players can be used to store digital photos, there are other storage options that target specifically digital camera users

PICTURE-PERFECT STORAGE

DIGITAL cameras have overtaken film ones as the devices of choice to capture those Kodak moments in our lives.

But one of the banes of globe-trotting photographers is limited memory capacity to store all the images.

You can lug your 2kg laptop on your holiday, but that leaves you with less space for souvenirs.

You can buy more memory cards, but prices can be prohibitive. A 512MB secure digital card, for instance, costs about \$180 currently.

Here's where portable storage devices come in handy and may be a more economical option.

In last week's Tech Thursday column, we looked at general purpose high-capacity portable storage devices that can store digital music and movies.

But what if you don't want to pay for features such as MP3 music playback and only need digital photo storage?

Dedicated image storage devices marry the features of these portable hard-disks with

ports and slots that allow you to directly upload your photos from your digital image storage cards without the need for a computer to do the transfer.

These devices are designed to cater specifically to digital camera road warriors who take hundreds of photos.

Nikon's Coolwalker (\$899) has a 30GB hard drive and a slew of features that would meet the needs of the serious digital photographer.

One of them is the ability to view NEF RAW image files – an uncompressed photo format used by higher-

end Nikon digital cameras – and TIFF image file directly on the built-in 2.5-inch TFT colour LCD display. The more common JPEG image file format is also supported.

You can organise your images, rename them, and view all meta-data, such as what kind of camera the photos were taken on.

All the major storage media card formats are supported via optional adaptors, and when you do connect the Coolwalker to a computer, you have the option of using the ubiquitous USB 1.1 or high-

speed USB 2.0 cables.

The Coolwalker also supports the PictBridge standard, which allows you to connect the device directly to a PictBridge-enabled photo printer.

If you don't need to view your pictures on the device itself, Sanho's \$249 CompactDrive PD7X (above) does the job and more. You get to choose what size hard drive to install in the device, and it transfers images from memory cards to the hard drive very quickly.

Said Mr Daniel Chin, marketing manager for EastGear: "We've sold over 500 units of the CompactDrive since it was launched in June."

EastGear is the sole distributor for the CompactDrive, and Mr Chin said that it is the most popular product at its sole retail outlet at Peninsula Plaza.

Detractors and sceptics may say that these gadgets can fail and lose data, but memory cards, laptops, film rolls and even cameras are also susceptible to damage.

Considering their large storage capacity and small size, digital image storage devices definitely have their place in the digital road warriors' arsenals.



By CHRISTOPHER LIM

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