



The Sidekick™

Telephoto pan adapter for ball heads SK-100

Danger!

Please read these instructions carefully to avoid any damage to your equipment caused by carelessness and to get the most out of your purchase.

Overview

With the Wimberley Sidekick, you can turn your ball head into a telephoto pan head. The Sidekick's raised pivot axis allows the lens-camera combination (from here on simply referred to as the lens) to be rotated (or panned) around its center of gravity.

With perfect balance, this significantly simplifies handling heavy telephoto lenses. One advantage of the Sidekick is that you can easily remove it at any time and use your ball head as usual, for example, for macro photography.

Because the Sidekick is so short and stable, the lens's vibrations are no greater than if it were mounted directly on the ball head.

This quick guide explains how to mount the Sidekick and balance your lens. A more detailed guide covers the following topics: using smaller lenses, mounting large lenses, ball head requirements, quick-release plates, and maintenance instructions.

etc.

Requirements for using the Sidekick

- 1) You need a ball head with an Arca-Swiss compatible quick-release coupling, such as those from Arca Swiss, Kirk, Really Right Stuff, Markins, Foba, and Studioball. **The Sidekick is not compatible with standard couplings from Gitzo and Manfrotto.**
- 2) The ball head requires an independent panoramic axis, which allows by loosening a button to rotate the head 360° with the ball locked.
- 3) The lens must have a clamp and be equipped with an Arca-Swiss compatible quick-release plate. Wimberley plates have safety stops that prevent accidental disengagement from a loosened clamp. Choosing the right plate or replacement foot is important for correctly balancing the lens. This is especially important for the Sidekick due to its side-mounted suspension. Wimberley plates are perfectly matched. Plates or feet from other manufacturers should have the same dimensions and quality.

If your equipment does not meet one or more of these requirements, please read the section "The requirements" further down in the supplementary instructions.

Assembly

1. Turn the neck of the ball head with the coupling into the horizontal position (into the recess of the ball head socket) as shown in Fig. 1.
2. Adjust the coupling so that it is vertical in both planes. (If you are using the Acratech Ultimate ball head, which does not have a side slot, adjust the coupling at a 45° angle to the base of the ball head.) and make sure it is absolutely securely locked.

3. Fix the coupling in this position by locking the ball head with the corresponding knob.

The Sidekick can now be inserted into the coupling as shown in Fig. 2.

4. To do this, release the clutch and push the lower side of the Sidekick into the clamp so that the upper

Make sure the end of the coupling is aligned with the counterpart on the Sidekick, and tighten the clamp. You now have a telephoto pan head.

Your ball head should allow two independent movements: the ball and the panoramic axis. The former is locked when used with the Sidekick (very important!). Free movement along the panoramic axis is maintained.

The Sidekick itself allows panning in the vertical direction, and the lens collar, if desired, the rotation the camera between portrait and landscape format.

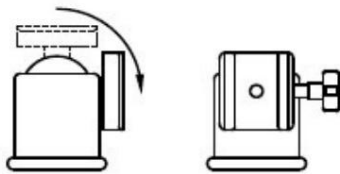


Fig. 1

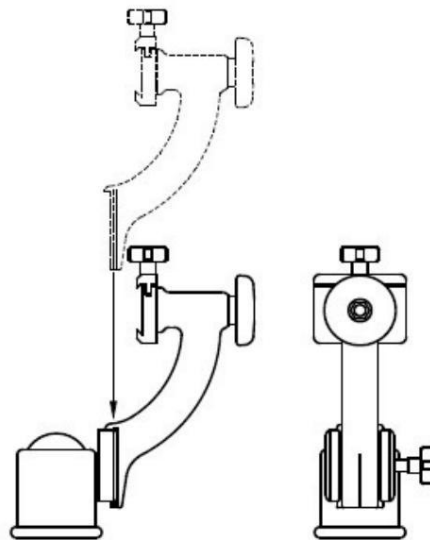


Fig. 2

Mounting the lens – Important precautions!

To use with the Sidekick, the lens must be equipped with a quick-release plate of sufficient length. If it's too short, the lens cannot be balanced correctly.

Please consult our website for the appropriate plate for your lens. Plates from other manufacturers must be Arca-Swiss compatible and at least as long as the recommended Wimberley plate.

The Sidekick has a quick-release coupling similar to the one on your ball head. Open the clamp, insert the plate (with lens), and tighten the clamp. (Fig. 3) There are two methods for this. The plate is inserted from the side with the clamp only slightly loosened, or it can be inserted from the top with the clamp more open (top loading). Which method you use is a matter of preference. **However, when using safety stops, such as those found on Wimberley plates, the top loading method must be used.**

Caution! Extra care should be taken with heavy lenses.

Photographers say that they treat their lens like a baby.

Fig. 3

Fig. 4

Caution! - The weight of the lens can cause the plate to jam in the clamp, giving the false impression that it's tightened when it's not. To prevent this:

- Hold the lens firmly while tightening the clamp and ensure that the
The lens plate rests flush against the coupling surface. This careful approach will soon become habitual, but it should be done very consciously at first.
Never be too confident when it comes to your expensive equipment!
- If you do not feel comfortable or confident with the procedure described above, you can
Likewise, mount the Sidekick to the lens first and then the entire assembly on the ball head. This is a little less convenient, but ensures a secure connection between the lens and Sidekick. • This caution is even more important if you use the tripod with the assembly on the

Shoulder carry. Always ensure that the lens is firmly seated in the closed clamp. • **If you have a coupling with a lever clamp, be sure to read the corresponding warnings.**

below in the supplementary instructions!

Caution! - The profile piece used to secure the Sidekicks in the ball head clamp does not have a safety stop at the bottom. Therefore, it can slip out if the clamp is not firmly closed. • If the ball head is not fully in the

horizontal position while the tripod is carried over the shoulder, the Sidekick
possibly turn upside down and then slide out.

- Therefore, it is important that the ball head is able to hold your equipment firmly not only in an upright position
but also when the tripod is held horizontally. • **Wimberley offers the Sidekick**

Safety plate AK-100, which prevents slipping out of both lever clamp and screw clamp couplings.

The Sidekick can be mounted on either the left or right side of the lens (see Fig. 4), depending on whether you prefer to use the friction knob of the Sidekick or the controls on the lens with your right hand.
wants to serve.

The Sidekick's lower profile plate has four threaded holes: two smaller horizontal holes and two larger vertical holes. These are used for mounting special adapter plates, such as the Sidekick spacer plates (AP-900, 901, 902, and 903), the Sidekick safety plate (AK-100), and the Manfrotto hex coupling adapter plate (AP-950).

Please also read the sections "Large lenses" and "Precautions when using lever-type couplings" in the supplementary instructions.

Balancing the lens – Precautions

Find the center of gravity of your lens by sliding the lens plate back and forth in the quick-release coupling (Fig. 5). **Caution: Continuously support the weight of the lens.** This will prevent damage to your equipment and make it easier to slide back and forth.

- Hold the lens firmly and carefully loosen the control knob of the sidekick (if clamped).

If the lens tilts forward, loosen the clamp slightly and push the lens back a little.

Immediately close the clamp again and test the balance.

- If the lens tilts backwards, loosen the clamp slightly and slide the lens in small steps

forward until you find your balance. • **Caution: It is very important that the**

The lens plate extends at least 1.5 cm beyond the center of the coupling (see Fig. 6). If this is not the case,

If this happens, the plate may slip out of the clamp! If your existing plate isn't long enough to bring the lens into the center of gravity, read the section "The Right Lens Plate" in the supplementary instructions. • If the lens and camera are correctly balanced, the mount will no longer tilt.

forward or backward by itself.

- Loosen the control knob of the Sidekick by about a quarter turn and the knob of the panorama axis on the ball head, and you're ready to go. • **Caution:** Do not loosen

accidentally press the friction button or the ball head lock!

- Align the lens and when you release it, if correctly balanced, it should stay in this position

You can take photos in the released position or lock the sidekick.

- If you add teleconverters, flash mounts, etc., the lens will need to be rebalanced afterwards.

- The assembly will be easier later if you mark the correct position on the lens plate marked.

- **Caution:** Always secure the Sidekick securely when removing the camera from the lens

Remove it! Otherwise the lens could suddenly tip forward.

WARNING

- Because the Sidekick is mounted on a ball joint, there are an unusually high number of buttons that could accidentally be loosened. With practice, you'll learn which buttons to use and which to avoid. But overconfidence can be dangerous. **So always check all buttons to make sure they're locked before you begin!**
- **If you have a ball head that has been retrofitted with an Arca Swiss compatible coupling, make sure that it is firmly mounted on the neck (preferably with an adhesive such as Loctite).**

The Sidekick can exert considerable leverage on this connection when the tripod is carried over the shoulder. If you're using a heavy lens, the mount should be supported so that the weight of the lens tightens the screw in the coupling rather than loosening it. (There are no known cases where this causes problems, but if you're using such a ball head, it's best to play it safe.)

- Ensure that all quick-change clamps are correctly tightened when you Carry the tripod with the mount over your shoulder.

Supplementary instructions for the Wimberley Sidekick

Using smaller or larger lenses than 300mm f2.8

The Sidekick was designed for lenses 300mm f/2.8 or smaller and can be used with, for example, the Canon 500mm f/4.5 or Nikon 500mm f/4.0 MF. Lenses other than these may cause problems, but in principle, with appropriate modifications, the Sidekick can be used with any lens that has a clamp. **The decisive criterion for using the Sidekick is the maximum load capacity of your ball head.** Customers successfully use the Sidekick with lenses ranging from 80-200mm f/2.8 up to 600mm f/4.0.

Smaller lenses.

Small lenses (such as the 300mm f/4, 70-200mm f/2.8) are shorter and quite light compared to most professional camera bodies. Balancing a short lens may require the coupling to be so close to the camera body that there's not enough room for your fingers (see Fig. 7). **So, first of all, it's worth considering that with small lenses, it's better to use a lightweight camera body.**

If this is not an option, the problem can be solved by mounting the Sidekick on the left side of the lens (Fig. 8).

If you want more access to the bottom of the lens, or if the camera body or battery grip restricts the upward tilt angle, carefully release the ball head friction and tilt the Sidekick backward, as shown in Figure 9. **Caution:** If the Sidekick is tilted too far, the shift in the center of gravity may make movement along the panoramic axis somewhat stiff. You may need to experiment a bit to find the maximum angle that still allows smooth panning.

If it's not possible to balance the lens correctly even when mounted on the left side and with a lighter camera body, the only option is to use a counterweight, or even work without balancing. The simplest method is to use a small sandbag (e.g., a light aerobic weight cuff) as a counterweight.

(Be careful with zoom lenses, as the extending parts are often not particularly stable!)

Some variable-length zoom lenses can also change their center of gravity when zooming (e.g. the Canon 100-400).

This is usually not a major problem.

Simply balance the lens at the focal length you expect to use primarily

Zooming to a different focal length will shift the balance slightly, but handling won't be significantly affected. However, adjusting the sidekick's locking knob for some friction may help.

Fig. 7

Fig. 8

Fig. 9

Large lenses

The Sidekick can support the weight of a large lens, but even here, problems can arise. Typically, larger lenses also have a greater distance between the centerline and the base of the lens foot. The Nikon 600mm is an extreme example of this.

The taller the lens, the further it extends beyond the center of the ball head, placing uneven load on the panoramic plane. Furthermore, the larger lever also places greater load on the Sidekick itself. Therefore, only some of the large telephoto lenses can be used with the Sidekick without modification and with a standard lens plate.

For many large lenses, the original lens mount can be removed and replaced with a shorter replacement mount. If this isn't sufficient, a special spacer plate for the Sidekick can be used. **The Wimberley catalog and our website provide a list of recommended quick-release plates and accessories for various lenses.** Please contact Wimberley or your dealer if your lens isn't listed there.

The center axis of the lens does not have to be directly above the center of the ball head.

It is important that the center of gravity of the lens/sidekick assembly (which is slightly off the lens axis in the direction of the sidekick) is located vertically above the base of the ball head.

The best sign is that the ball head can be rotated smoothly in the panoramic plane, unaffected by the weight of the lens. The larger your ball head, the more flexibility you have.

If it seems impossible to modify the lens accordingly (like the Nikon 500mm f4 AF-I or the old Nikon 200-400 f4 without VR), Wimberley can supply a special adapter that still allows use with the Sidekick.

CAUTION! - Using lenses that are too large without the recommended Wimberley replacement foot or Sidekick spacers can cause excessive stress and wear on the ball head's panoramic plane due to an unfavorable center of gravity. If your ball head glides less smoothly than usual when used with the Sidekick, the lens is probably too large.

Additional flexibility

The requirements

A. The appropriate ball head: We recommend using only robust ball heads with the Sidekick that we are confident can withstand the leverage created by side-mounting. Smaller ball heads are cheaper but not recommended for this application. **If you choose to use a smaller ball head than Wimberley recommends, you do so at your own risk.**

If your current ball head does not have an Arca Swiss compatible quick release coupling, the following options are available:

- 1) Buy a new ball head with the appropriate coupling. Recommended are the Arca-Swiss Monoball (with Wimberley C-12), Kirk BH-1, Really Right Stuff BH-55, or Markins M-10 or M-20, depending on the size of your lens. 2)

Retrofit the ball head with an Arca Swiss compatible coupling.

On many heads, the clutch can be removed and replaced with the Wimberley C-12, which comes with a wrench and screws, as well as instructions for converting different heads.

WARNING for lever-type quick-change couplers: Wimberley strongly advises against using these couplers with the Sidekick. You do so at your own risk.

B. The right lens plate: First and foremost, the plate must be long enough to balance your lens correctly. This means you must be able to push the lens far enough back with a light camera and without a teleconverter, or far enough forward with a heavy camera and teleconverters or extension tubes.

If you need a plate for your lens, check out the Wimberley website or contact a dealer. Wimberley quick-release plates feature safety stops on both sides and work perfectly with Wimberley's flash mounts.

Use with flash units

Because the lens mount is positioned to the side of the lens with a Sidekick mount, conventional flash mounts would position the flash on the other side of the lens. Therefore, Wimberley developed a flash mount specifically for the Sidekick that extends only 90° (instead of 180°) around the lens, allowing the flash to be positioned above as usual. **This mount requires an external flash unit and a cable to connect to the camera's hot shoe.**

Wimberley's modular flash bracket system allows for the assembly of various mounts from a few components. Figure 10 shows the Wimberley Sidekick Flash Bracket F-6.

Fig. 10

With just one additional module, this can then also be used with the ball head. The mounts are simply attached with quick-release clamps, so no screwing is required. Information about the Wimberley flash mount system can be found in the Wimberley catalog, on the website, or from your Wimberley dealer.

Unlike the Wimberley Head, the Sidekick has no vertical adjustment.

This means that the flash mount will be slightly overweight. This doesn't have a major impact on the overall handling of the lens, but it does mean that you can't simply release it and it won't stay in place without locking it. The lighter the lens, the greater this effect will be. With very heavy lenses, however, it should be barely noticeable.

Note: If you want to use a fill-in flash but don't have a flash bracket, you can also attach the flash to the camera's hot shoe. This has the disadvantage, however, that the flash will be positioned sideways in portrait format. On the other hand, the distance between the flash and the optical axis is often not large enough to avoid, for example, the red-eye effect. However, for light fill-in flashes, both problems are of little consequence.

Tripod level adapter

If the tripod plate isn't level, the horizon will shift when panning for a panorama. For those who don't have the lens collar locked, this isn't a problem. For everyone else, it's beneficial to find a way to level the tripod head. Various tripod manufacturers, such as Manfrotto, Gitzo, and Berlebach, offer such adapters as tripod heads or as integrated solutions.

Using the Sidekick on a monopod

Telescopic head mounts can also be used on a monopod. Since horizontal panning is achieved by rotating the monopod, a ball head is not necessary.

As a lightweight alternative, the Sidekick can be mounted on a Manfrotto one-way head with the Wimberley C-12 quick-release coupling. The head is simply tilted 90°, and the Sidekick is then mounted with the clamp, just like on the ball head. For heavier lenses, however, a more stable ball head is still the better choice.

Variant.

Of course, the monopod must also be designed for a corresponding maximum weight.

Maintenance, warranty and repair

The Sidekick typically requires no regular maintenance. It is constructed primarily of aluminum and stainless steel. The only area where corrosion can occur is the spherical roller thrust bearing of the tilt mechanism.

If the Sidekick has become contaminated with seawater or sand, it can be disassembled and cleaned relatively easily.

If you need to disassemble the tilt bearing, consult the design diagram at the end of this manual. **Note:** We are not aware of any cases of corrosion on this bearing. It is protected by a thin film of oil. If you are still concerned because your Sidekick has been exposed to extreme conditions, such as persistent rain or seawater, you can dry the bearing and lubricate it with oil or light grease.

For spare parts, please contact Wimberley or your dealer.

3-year limited international warranty

All Wimberley products sold by Wimberley, Inc. directly or through an authorized Wimberley dealer are covered by a 3-year limited warranty on

Manufacturing defects and malfunctions under normal use. Wimberley, Inc. will cover transportation costs for the first 365 days of purchase. After that, the customer is responsible for shipping to Wimberley, and Wimberley will cover return shipping costs. A dated receipt must be presented. A digital image of the damage should be emailed to Wimberley beforehand so that further action can be determined.

All warranty returns must be accompanied by a completed customs form 3311.

Repair and spare parts _____

For product issues outside the warranty, Wimberley will make every effort to resolve the issue within a reasonable cost. Please contact an authorized dealer. Please note, however, that dealers do not stock spare parts.

Sidekick exploded view

contact

Thank you for choosing Wimberley products. We'd be happy to hear any comments or suggestions you may have. High customer satisfaction is our goal, and we will continue to work on improving the Sidekick, even based on customer suggestions.

We wish you much success with your Sidekick.

If you have any questions, please contact:

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