



Steiner's all-rounder

Tough, versatile and surprisingly advanced, the Steiner Ranger BT 4-15x56 is a mid-priced scope with serious clout, finds Chris Parkin

What do we have here? A 56mm objective riflescope with a 4-16x magnification range that is ideal for UK shooters wanting to control foxes and stalk deer on larger areas, where the higher magnification with a fine reticle makes precisely aimed shots a little easier – doubly important on smaller quarry. For a hill stalker approaching deer to 150-200 metres, you have all you need, but should you need a back-up shot at a longer range, the ability to dial out further is a blessing.

The aluminium tube sports a smooth matt finish that won't look dirty from skin abrasion, with clean lines toward a central spherical saddle for the inner mechanics. A similarly radiused profile swells up towards the ocular body, with a rubberised magnification collar along the way. This scope will not snag on foliage or clothing, and I like the look of it, without any gaps or crevices to attract dirt that would create an abrasive paste at mechanical junctures. There is a small wing on the zoom control just below 8x that's great for tactile use in the dark, and the fast focus eyepiece

allows a broad range from +2/-3 dioptre, accommodating for ocular variation among us humans.

The saddle's left side shows a parallax dial operating backlash-free from 50m to infinity with an illumination control for the central dot in the 4A-I reticle in the second focal plane. The rotary control is marked from 0 to 6 in moonlight mode, with 7-11 as daylight settings. Each step has an intervening 'off' stage to save you time going from off to your desired setting. There are no automated positional controls or timer to save the battery but it's easy



The 4A-Illuminated reticle was always in sharp focus with no light bleeding into the broad field of view



Be careful not to lose the tiny screws when lifting off the original dial cap or replacing it with the external turret of the BC kit

enough to replace the CR2032 under a cap – it doesn't need a coin or screwdriver to unfasten either. The dials could perhaps benefit from more aggressive knurling, but have been designed to accompany the styling ethos of the optic. Larger diameter dials and heavier clicks make it easier to feel adjustments, but their size on a sporting rifle has to be a compromise, otherwise they become too bulky.

Each capped dial conceals a finger-adjustable knob with 80 1cm-at-100m clicks per rotation. Zeroing is accomplished within the 85cm (10.5 turns) available vertically, with 55cm available laterally



Parallax control is backlash-free and the selected range on the BC turret was clearly obvious up to 400m



Both adjustments are achieved in the same format as the windage dial, shown here below a screw cap



4-16x56 is a great all-round specification for UK hunters

for windage, its 1cm-at-100m values corresponding to mRad calculations on ballistic programs for an intuitive system. If you want, there is a Ballistic Control to add on as well. A supplied Phillips screwdriver allows removal of the twin screws on the elevation dial to lift off the cap. The kit contains five engraved collars with detailed instructions on how to pick the best for your cartridge. Yes, these are approximations, but they are intended for hunting ranges, not long-range precision, and will certainly give adjustments appropriate to the kill zones of relevant quarry species.

The clicks are delicate, so take your time setting up in a relaxed, noise-free environment, allowing you to hear if anything moves. After placing the collar in line with the 100m zero marker, push the replacement dial cap over so the rubber o-ring holds the position until you tighten both screws back in place. Each collar

shows drop figures to 400 metres; the closest to your calibre is the one to use, but velocity variations within calibres and bullet designs are the two main variables.

I paid particular attention when testing the collars with a rifle in .17 Hornet, an unusual calibre that is initially incredibly fast yet with a poor BC that allows the speed to scrub off quickly. It didn't fit any of the collars particularly – it's one you need to take the blank collar and mark out for yourself. More conventional cartridges – I tried .17 HMR, .270 and .308 – matched a supplied collar far more easily.

I was able to make first-round hits within steel silhouettes' kill zones during a brief trajectory test. I came away happy considering the effort taken, but practice and testing are crucial to squeeze out the maximum long-term benefit of any system like this. I have done this more times with more scopes, ammo and rifles than I can remember, so it's easy to forget how regular

SPECIFICATIONS

- Objective lens:** 56mm
- Magnification:** 4-16x
- Overall weight:** 720g
- Overall length:** 368mm
- Temperature range:** -25/65 degrees
- Exit pupil:** 12.0-4.5mm
- Field of view:** 9.2-2.3m @ 100m
- Eye relief:** 90mm
- Dioptr adjustment:** -3/+2
- Parallax:** 50m to Infinity
- Reticle:** 4A Illuminated, 2nd focal plane
- Click value:** 1cm @ 100m
- Maximum elevation and windage:** 85 elevation, 55cm windage @ 100m
- Tube diameter:** 30mm
- Waterproof:** 2m, Nitrogen charged
- Warranty:** 10 years (2 years on electronics)
- Accessories:** Rubberised lens caps
- Price:** £1,135
- Contact:** GMK 01489 579999
www.gmk.co.uk

it is to me, but the supplied instructions are clear and concise.

Optically, Steiners are good for their price point and with reliable mechanics. They hover in the middle-ground, with a price tag just above £1,000 but not quite the optical ability of their higher-echelon peers. Yet in daylight conditions on stalking ground, the colour contrast and sharpness of the image and its crisp 4A reticle were ideal. Little light bleed was emitted from the fibre optics in the illuminated reticle even at an ultra-high setting (used in darkness to highlight the 'bleed'), and the red dot stayed sharp and small with simple, fast adjustment. I feel rotary controls need less effort than push buttons, with more balanced forces needed, and correspondingly less physical disruption to your alignment.

The mechanics and glass are good, the lens grinding is good, and yes, like all optics, it has a plethora of coatings and is certainly no slouch, but as can be expected on a scale of price, it does show slightly fewer minutes of performance as the light fades. Yet, on a hunting trip last year using its smaller 42mm brother, I could still take a shot on a whitetail deer well into dusk, so I'd be very happy to carry the 56mm unit on a trip in the UK, knowing I could rely on it. ■