

Pat's Product Review: North American Arms .22 LR Mini-Revolver and Guardian .32 Autopistol

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I'm not a fan of "mouse calibers" for self-defense! However, I'm a firm believer in having some sort of back-up piece to my main gun. I still remember when I saw my first [North American Arms](#) (NAA) Mini .22 LR revolver. I want to say it was in the mid 1970s, and I was at my favorite gun shop in a southwestern suburb of Chicago. I was good friends with the fellow who worked there, and he always wore a baseball cap. He took his baseball cap off, and revealed he was carrying, in a pocket, sewn into the brim of the hat: a North American Arms mini-revolver in .22 LR. I was really taken with the itty-bitty gun because of the compactness of it, and how easily it could be concealed.

Needless to say, I purchased a NAA mini-revolver on-the-spot that day. I took it to the indoor range at the gun shop and had a blast shooting the little gun. I did find out though, that the gun was ammo sensitive, and there were some misfires with certain brands of .22 LR ammo. I carried that little gun in my jacket pocket, as a back-up to a .357 Magnum Colt snubby revolver that I carried in my duties as a Private Investigator. I also worked another gig as a plainclothes store detective, and one of my duties was taking the weekend cash receipts (sometimes as much as \$50,000) to the bank at the far end of the mall parking lot. I carried the bank bag stuffed inside of a store bag, so it looked like I had just purchased something from the store. I also kept my hand in my jacket pocket, on the little NAA mini-revolver. There never was a problem going to the bank.

I don't recall what I did with that little NAA mini-revolver - probably traded it for something else. It was just recently that I received a new NAA mini-revolver for testing. These little guns only weigh 4.5 oz, so you hardly even know you're carrying one. I also requested an inside the pocket holster for my sample. Neat holster, in which, you could also carry 5 spare rounds of .22 LR ammo. Now, make no mistake, you can not speed reload the NAA .22 LR if you fire all 5 shots. However, the extra ammo is there should you have an opportunity to get behind cover and reload the gun. Loading takes time, you have to remove the cylinder pin and cylinder from the revolver in order to load it, and it takes longer to reload, as you have to punch out the empty brass.

The NAA mini-revolver is made out of stainless steel, and that's a good thing for a gun you are gonna carry in a pocket. You can also get a holster to carry it on your belt. However, I think pocket carry is the way to go. They also make a grip that looks to all the world like you're carrying a folding knife in your pocket - all you see is the clip on the outside of your pants pocket. Neat! [JWR Adds: Consult your local and state law, of course.] With a 1-1/8" barrel you're not gonna get a lot of velocity out of this gun, nor are we looking at any sort of long-range accuracy, either. This gun is meant as a last-ditch back-up to whatever else you might be carrying in my humble opinion. The NAA .22 LR fires single-action only, which means you have to cock the hammer for each shot. The sights - well for me, forget about it--they are too small. Then again, this little revolver is for up-close and personal use: sort of "stick it in their face or ear" and fire it.

I only fired the mini-revolver at 10 feet, as I believe this is a realistic distance for a back-up gun of this size and caliber. I wasn't getting itty-bitty groups - not gonna lie about that. However, I was able to put 5-shots into a head-sized target, and that's good enough for making someone wish they had picked on another victim.

NAA makes a variety of mini-revolvers, from .22 Short through .22 Magnum, and there are all manner of barrel lengths as well as methods in which to carry these guns. They even make a belt buckle holster, if you care to carry the gun in the open - few would be the wiser looking at the belt buckle with the gun on it.

In the earlier NAA mini-revolvers, it was only safe to carry 4 rounds in the 5 round chamber, for fear of dropping the gun and it landing on the hammer and firing the live round under the hammer. On the new guns, you can safely load all 5 chambers and then put the hammer on half-cock, and there's no fear of the gun firing if you drop it. I have a friend who is a gun writer, and he routinely carries a NAA mini-revolver in his front shirt pocket - as a back-up to a .357 Mag revolver in his right front pants pocket. I'd like to see NAA devise some kind of "holster" carry for carrying this little gun in a baseball cap. Sure, you can devise a little pouch and sew it into a baseball cap yourself. But I'd like to see a professionally done "holster" for this type of carry. The last place anyone would look for a gun on your person, would be inside a baseball cap.

I literally had a blast testing the little mini-revolver. I fired a couple hundred rounds through it. This was not all in one session, as loading and reloading are slow. I fired four different types of .22 LR ammo and had *zero* failures to fire. The trigger pull is a bit stout, then again, this isn't any sort of target gun, it's meant for close-up, last ditch, self-defense us--as well, as just shooting fun. Full retain is only \$199 on this little gun, it's worth checking one out if you are looking for a last line of defense. It's better than a sharp stick or better than throwing rocks. Sure, the .22 LR isn't any sort of man stopper, but it would sure make a bad guy wish he that were some place

else when the chips are down and you are unloading on him.

The Guardian .32 Autopistol

The second sample I received from NAA is their Guardian .32 - this is their .32 ACP semiauto pistol. I had previously tested the NAA Guardian in .32 NAA caliber and .380 ACP, and really liked both of 'em. I did an article for *American Handgunner* on those two samples, and they were great performers. I was especially taken with the .32 NAA a proprietary round, but it had lots of power behind it. So, I was anxious to test the Guardian in 32 ACP. The .32 ACP is on the smaller frame - the size of a .25 auto - we're talking a very small automatic pistol, with 6+1 rounds of .32 ACP ready to go. Again, I personally wouldn't carry this as my main gun, instead, it would be a back-up to whatever my main gun might be. Yes, I consider the .32 ACP in the "mouse gun caliber" category. However, with the right load, the .32 ACP can get the job done for you. In my case, I requested some [Buffalo Bore Ammunition](#) .32 ACP hard cast +P 75 grain ammo for testing in this little gun. Tim Sundles, who owns Buffalo Bore ammo, believes that this is the way to go if you're carrying a .32 ACP, as his Flat Nose +P round will really penetrate and break bones. I'm not about to argue with him. He knows his stuff.

I requested the base-line Guardian .32, nothing fancy - just as basic as you can get. You can also order one with various types of sights on it - and take a close look at the NAA web site to see what's available. The basic sights on the base-line Guardian .32 are really small, in fact *too small* for my aged eyes to see, especially if doing any rapid-fire. However, I consider the Guardian .32 as another close-up, last ditch weapon. My shooting was done at five yards, and I think that's a fair distance for this little gun. I could get 3-to-4 inch groups (point shooting) at that distance, under rapid-fire conditions. I will say though, that the Buffalo Bore +P loads let you know you have something in your hand - the little 13.5 oz gun really bucked. The 10 pound trigger pull was a hindrance - at first. However, after firing the gun a few times, I didn't notice the heavy pull. Again, this isn't a target gun, you can't stage the trigger - it's aim and fire. Don't try to stage the trigger or you'll pull the sights off-target.

The Guardian .32 is a double-action only pistol, and the trigger pull is long and heavy. It's nothing you can't learn to shoot in short order, though. The 2.49" barrel isn't going to take advantage of all the velocity offered by the Buffalo Bore ammo +P load, but you are still getting +P power out an itty-bitty semiauto pistol, that will surely get someone's attention if they are hit with this round. NAA was also kind enough to send me a spare magazine and an inside-the-pants shark skin pocket holster. The Guardian .32 comes with one magazine, that has an extended base on it - and it was enough to get 1-1/2 fingers on the gun for a grip. With the spare magazine with the flat base on it, I could only get my rhimb and one finger around the gun. The extended base magazine is definitely the way to go.

Like the 22 LR, the Guardian .32 is made out of stainless steel, and the grips are some sort of hard plastic. You can also get all manner of grips as an option from NAA. And I'd look at getting a pair of wood grips, that are a tad thicker, for a better grip. NAA also offers all sorts of holsters for the Guardian .32 as well. They have a great selection of accessories for all their guns - and they make about 70 different models and variations of guns.

The magazine release was a bit stiff on my Guardian .32 sample, then again, this gun isn't made for speed-reloading. It took a sure press on the magazine release button to drop the magazine.

What I really liked about the NAA Guardian .32 is the fact that it is very well-made. It's not like some cheap \$50 .25 ACP handgun. This gun will last you a lifetime, and, should you have any problems, NAA has a lifetime limited warranty and they'll take care of it for you. Full retail is \$402 on this little gun. Yeah, a little bit steep, but you are getting a high-quality pistol - not some cheap piece of junk. And, the Guardian .32 is fully capable of handling +P loads.

As for accuracy, I was getting 3-t--4 inch groups, rapid-fire, at 5 yards. That's good enough to put 'em all inside of a person's head, or into the vitals on the upper torso, too. I liked this gun - a lot! It's a great little gun to drop into your pocket, when you are walking out to get the mail or answering the front door.

Yep, no doubt about it, the .22 LR and .32 ACP are mouse calibers in my humble opinion. But no one ever said there isn't a place in the grand scheme of things of this smaller calibers. If you're looking for a last ditch back-up gun or two, take a look at the NAA .22 LR or the Guardian .32 - they are both well-made, high quality pieces, that do have a place in the self-defense line-up.